



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

# IT IS NO WONDER

THE POWER OF GOD  
TO MAKE US  
HAPPY AND TO KEEP US FROM  
BEING  
HAPPY  
THE POWER OF GOD TO MAKE US  
HAPPY AND TO KEEP US FROM  
BEING

J. LUTHERAL M. CO.



**IT IS NO WONDER.**

**VOL. II.**



# IT IS NO WONDER

A Story of Bohemian Life

BY

J. FITZGERALD MOLLOY

"In robe and crown the king stept down  
To meet and greet her on her way;  
'It is no wonder,' said the lords,  
'She is more beautiful than day.'"  
TENNYSON'S *Beggar Maid*.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



LONDON:

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,

18, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1882.

*All rights reserved.*

251. i. 792.



# IT IS NO WONDER.

---

## CHAPTER I.

### IS THIS A DREAM ?

WHEN Capri got out into the street she was sorely tempted to run from a sense of gladness within her; she could scarcely contain herself at the prospect of this sudden luck which had befallen her.

The sun was shining brightly as if in sympathy with her mood, and as an omen of her future success. She felt an undefinable sense of happiness in the air; felt as if she



could forgive anyone who had ever injured her, and make friends with the world at large.

Everyone who passed her by seemed merry and cheerful, seen through the happy light of her young eyes. She felt that she must get home quickly and tell her good fortune to some one, or she would die with the weight of its happiness.

She thought she would just go home first and see if her father was in : if not, she would run to dear old Pallamari and unburden herself to him ; he was always sympathetic, and he would be certain to rejoice with her in this change of prospects.

Opening the door of the house in Euston Road with her latch-key, she quickly ran up the stairs that now seemed to her darker and narrower and more stuffy than ever, and entered the familiar sitting-room.

There was no one there, but oh, how

changed the place seemed to have grown during her two brief hours of absence ! She could scarcely believe she had lived in these rooms so long without feeling their utter and now most detestable shabbiness.

With the glare of Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson's yellow satin furniture, velvet carpets, lace hangings, and Medici cabinet yet in her eyes, the contrast was terrible.

The poor shabby-genteel room looked quite shamefaced, and all the more so from the stamp it bore of having seen better days. The once crimson curtains were now a horrid brick colour, darned here and there, as the unmerciful and searching sunlight, now shining through them, too plainly showed : they were thick with a coating of dust which no amount of shaking would dislodge. The carpet looked wretchedly threadbare, unless where the centre table had given it shelter and protection ; and the sofa, for all its

chintz covering, had a broken-down looking, deceptive appearance.

The table was weak-legged, that could be easily seen, though its infirmity was sought to be covered by a washed-out cover ; and the poor old piano in the corner, how yellow and worn the notes looked ! Above it hung a picture supposed to be a landscape in oils, but so black with time and smoke was it that the artist's original idea was completely lost sight of ; it presented a magnificent blank of many shades.

The old-fashioned wall-paper, with its great bouquets, looking like veritable last roses of summer, so faded were they, was cracked and discoloured ; all wore a miserable aspect of dinginess in her sight, such as she had never noticed before.

What would not money do, she asked herself, what wonders could it not work. It was only gold which wrought the differ-

ence between this faded room and the handsome drawing-room in Mayfair, bright with colour, luxurious and fresh and sweet with many plants and flowers.

Yet what a difference !

“ Ah, money is the great lever that moves the world,” she said, with a short bitter sigh.

Why should people like Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson, who were vulgar, and could not appreciate the subtle beauty of those things which surrounded them, have wealth, while she, to whom objects of art and loveliness made all the difference in life, was poor, and had to live in a room like this in a dirty, noisy thoroughfare ? However, it was well the worst of her days had gone by. The future offered well, and she was not one to miss opportunities that might present themselves.

A smell of cigars was hanging about the room ; so different from the odour of fra-

grant plants and flowers fresh cut from the gardens, which filled Mrs. Lordson's apartment. It gave her a headache, she fancied, and changed her mood in a minute. She had come in full of spirits, and bright with hopes for the future, radiant because of the good prospects which had so unexpectedly befallen her, happy as a morning in spring, looking confidently and joyously towards her coming days, prepared to be pleased with all the world; and yet a few brief moments, the sight of a dingy room, the smell of stale cigars, and the contrast between money and poverty had changed her completely, and made her miserable. She felt heavy and depressed, and inclined to regard all things with bitterness; she thought that hers had been a wasted life, so far as it had gone; that she had not been sent into existence to pass her days in a back-floor shabby pair in the Euston Road,

and lead a life made up of petty shifts, and small worries, and continual efforts to keep up an appearance that was at best a wretched make-belief of respectability. And yet the fairest and brighter years of her young life had gone by in this manner; had been squandered in attending to trifles; wasted on efforts to keep things straight for the sake of a father who had but small claims on her sympathy or affection.

“How did I bear it all so long?” she said to herself, remembering the loans extracted by the captain from acquaintances and friends, thinking of his manners, bombastic and patronising, or servile and humiliating, according to the people he addressed; and calling to mind her own fibs to the landlady, her hypocritical and politic smiles to Mrs. Fum’s daughters; the apologies for small debts due to the tradespeople, and the thousand little humiliations she had to

endure, and little acts of meanness she had to inflict on herself.

"It was all so petty," she said, indignant at the memory of these facts which rose before her. "I think my conscience would feel more easy under one good crime than under the whole miserable list of those shabby little tricks and pretences."

She shrugged her shoulders, and a hard look came into her eyes, a disdainful smile crossed her lips. She dragged one of the horse-hair chairs by the back across the poor, faded carpet to the table, on which lay a tattered volume of Shakespeare, coverless, greasy, and dog-eared from long and faithful service. In her vexation she took the book up, and flung it in the fire-place. She watched its flight through the air, saw its leaves flutter, and some pages drop to the ground, and then heard it fall with a thud inside the fender.

She felt all the better for this act, trifling as it was; she longed to break or tear something. It would have relieved her feelings immensely at that moment, but it was a luxury she could not afford.

Just then she heard some one coming up the stairs. She thought at first she recognised the step, but then again, on listening more attentively, she came to the conclusion it was some visitor to the tenants of the upper floor. The tread lacked the swiftness of familiarity. If it was anyone for her, it was probably the baker's bill—she owed him a few shillings—or the laundress, who was about to look in for the trifle due to her since last week.

Presently the footsteps, which were lighter than those of the baker's boy, or yet the washerwoman's, stopped outside the sitting-room door, and a tap sounded.

"Come in," she said, without turning



round ; perhaps, after all, it was but one of the wooden-figured, red-cheeked children coming for an early music-lesson.

Some one entered in answer to the permission she had shouted out in a voice not too amiable and sweet.

“Miss Capri !”

“Oh ! Lord Harrick I did not expect you so soon,” she said very bluntly, and without rising.

“Did you not ?” he said, stammering.

He looked so shy and young, with his round whiskerless boyish face, that she could not help smiling ; at which mark of friendliness on her part he smiled too, and bade fair to recover from his bashfulness quickly.

“Pa is out,” she said.

“Well, I was passing in this direction, and I thought I would look in, though I knew it was half an hour or so too early for my lesson,” he said apologetically.

He stretched out his hand, into which she placed her fingers coldly.

"If you will not mind, I shall wait until the captain comes in, Miss Capri."

"Pray do," she said, making an effort to be polite : she was out of humour, and had no desire to see him or anyone else just then.

"Thank you."

She got up and handed him one of the roughest and ugliest of the horsehair chairs, which she hoped would hurt him.

"Take a chair."

"You are very kind."

"Am I ? I was afraid I was not."

She sat down exactly opposite him, at the other side of the table, leaning her elbows on it, with her head on one hand. She had taken off her hat ; her hair was tossed upon her low forehead, her great liquid eyes had a troubled look in them

which he had never seen before, but which now interested him, and made her look yet more charming than he remembered to have seen her at any previous time. A faint colour lit up the purity of her olive complexion, her ripe lips pouted like a child's. She had the most lovely face he had ever seen. In every way she was charming. There was something seductive and infinitely graceful in her ways—so much in her manner of the girl, from which she was passing, mixed with the gentle woman, into which she was developing. Then the warmth of her rich southern beauty, her sweet voice, with its musical inflections, the very change of her various moods, all combined to charm, dazzle, and fascinate him more than he could as yet understand or yet express.

Sitting before her now, he could only stare at her mutely, a proceeding Capri did

not seem even conscious of ; he could not speak, for all his mind was engaged in thinking of her beauty, wondering why it was that she filled him with an admiration and a feeling with which no other woman had ever inspired him before.

Merely to sit so near her, to look into her face, was a pleasure that almost intoxicated him, to touch her hand was in itself a delight that stirred him with a sensation which he had never before experienced.

As Capri had raised her arm to support her head, the silver bangle rattled and reminded her of his present ; she suddenly felt touched with gratitude, and was sorry for the abruptness with which she had just received him, and which he had taken so good-naturedly.

As a recompense she resolved to act with more amiability towards him for the future, and, full of this good intention, she raised

her dark eyes to his. They were sunny with light. He roused himself from his abstraction and said,

“Do you know where I have been?”

He smiled so good-humouredly that she could not help doing so likewise. Her depression was fast passing away.

“No. How should I?” she replied.

“Can’t you guess?”

She thought he had been to the Grosvenor Gallery to see the “Beggar Maid” picture, but she said,

“Where have you been? Let me see, to luncheon, I suppose.”

“No, that is not what I mean,” he answered.

“Well, to the *matinée* performance of ‘Merely Players.’”

“No.”

“To the Academy?”

“Wrong again, but nearer the mark.”

"To the Grosvenor Gallery?"

"Yes."

"And so have I. How did you like it?"

"Oh! it was capital, especially one picture."

"Mine?"

"Yes, of course; it is stunning."

"I'm glad you like the 'Beggar Maid.'"

"Everyone likes it. There was a great crowd round it when I was there. They were all talking of it among themselves."

"What did they say of the 'Beggar Maid'?"

"A great many good things."

Capri's good spirit rose triumphantly again. She gave a clear, rippling, musical laugh. Lord Harrick laughed also.

"Clever fellow who painted you."

"Why?"

"Because the picture is—is capital."

"What does capital mean?" she asked quizzingly.

"Capital? Well, I mean the picture is handsome, charming—what shall I say?—well, it is wonderfully like you."

"You are growing quite like a courtier. When did you learn to pay compliments?"

"Did I pay a compliment?" he asked, innocently. "I only said what was true."

"There is another," she said, well pleased, her face rippling into smiles.

Lord Harrick was delighted at the progress in her friendship he was making.

Capri laid one hand on the table, small, delicate, and shapely, and in a moment Lord Harrick put forward his and playfully covered it with his large palm. For a moment she strove to take her hand away, but the more effort she made the closer he pressed it, until she let it rest placidly beneath his.

In an instant, and quick as electricity, when their hands met a thought flashed

upon her that made her faint and giddy for a second.

Was it possible that Lord Harrick loved her ?

The idea had never crossed her mind before ; now it broke upon her with a suddenness that almost took away her breath. Did he love her, or was his manner assumed to make time pass pleasantly to himself ? Was this but the customary conventional flirtation which he would forget in the next hour, and perhaps never recur again to, even in thought ?

Her quick feminine intuition assured her that he had fallen in love with her. Then in a flash the full force of what the possession of this man's love, honourably given—for she could not dream for a moment that it could be otherwise than honourable—might mean came upon her.

It dazzled and scared her. The prospect



was too bright; it was too much like a fantasy to which some wild thought had given rise. It was a dream over which she must not spend a moment's serious thought.

For a second her breath had ceased; her face changed, the almost child-like look had departed, the smile vanished from her lips, a look of anxious thought came into her eyes.

Was it possible he loved her? No. It was but a foolish thought. She drove it, or rather strove to drive it, away from her heart, but already it had changed from a mere thought into a faint hope that altered the whole world for her.

"And so you like my picture?" she said, resuming much of her old playful manner, and going back to their conversation.

"Like it!" he repeated. "It is stunning! You know I am not good at talking,

and finding words to say what I mean—but——”

“Yes, I know,” said Capri, anxious to spare him any effort on the present occasion. “I think—I fear I have been often unkind, perhaps rude to you,” she added suddenly.

“Oh! no, don’t say that, or you will make me feel deuced uncomfortable,” he said, pressing her hand tighter yet.

Whilst he spoke a new light came into his round blue eyes, the quick blood warmed in his veins.

“If I have I am sorry for it now,” the girl went on, without pretending to hear his last sentence. “And I say so to-day because I am going away from here soon—very soon.” She spoke in a low musical tone that had just a subtle touch of pathos in it, watching his face keenly the while.

“Going away?” he repeated.

He uncovered her hand in the surprise of the moment, and leaned back in his chair.

“You are jesting with me!”

Capri saw the glow of pleasure which a second ago crossed his face, now died slowly away; saw it, and made a mental note of the fact.

“No,” she answered, “I am quite in earnest.”

His face had fallen. She saw an anxious look coming into his eyes, as they stared fully at her across the table. He did not speak, and, after a moment’s pause, she went on.

“Shall you feel sorry?” she asked very gently.

“Confoundedly—I mean awfully sorry.”

Capri looked up at him suddenly; she saw he was in earnest.

The look of her soft dark eyes brought the light and colour back again to his face ; he put out both his hands across the table and took hers within them.

“ You are really going ? ”

“ Yes, I am going to live as companion with a Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson, an American lady to whom I have been introduced by a friend.”

“ Going to live with her in America ? ”

“ No, in Mayfair.”

“ That is a difference.”

“ A very decided difference.”

They both laughed.

“ Mrs. Lordson has just come to England, and seeks the society of ‘ a young person,’ as the advertisements say.”

“ Well, Mayfair is not so far,” he said, quite relieved. She was not going away from town, after all ; he was not to lose

sight of her as he first feared ; he felt almost happy again.

“ I may not stay with her long,” Capri’s soft voice said, “ for she is rich and a widow, and so may marry any day and have a companion for life, when my occupation will be gone.”

“ How awfully jolly that will be !” he answered, looking into her dark eyes that now under his gaze drooped until the long black lashes lay upon her cheek.

“ For Mrs. Lordson to have a companion for life, do you mean ?”

“ No.”

“ To have my occupation gone ?”

“ No. I—I didn’t mean that quite. you know ; what I meant was, will it not be jolly when the old girl marries, and you are free again.”

“ That depends, Lord Harrick,” she said with a little sigh, and affecting at once a

more serious manner. "I suppose I cannot be always free," she added.

"No, I suppose not," he said, putting the ends of his light moustache into his mouth in an absent-minded way; for the future freedom of Capri seemed to present a new train of ideas to his mind, which he was not quite prepared to think out just then.

Neither of them spoke for some time; the room was quite still; the sunlight fell slantingly through the red merino curtains on to the carpet, whose threadbare aspect it cruelly exposed; the rumbling noise of buses and cabs in the road outside fell faintly on their ears; the chimes of St. Pancras' Church sounded distinctly ringing a quarter to three; the house was unusually still.

The silence between them continued for some time, and silence between two young people in such circumstances is either dangerous or disagreeable.

To them it was not disagreeable. Capri was wondering again if he were really in love with her, and if so would he make her his wife?

It was a maddening thought. Would she become a viscountess—the future Viscountess Harrick? She felt that he loved her; she was conscious that she could make him love her; it was a power she had of winning people and making them like her, compelling them as it were, by the mere strength of her desire and will; it was a dangerous gift for herself as well as for others.

She glanced briefly at her chances of success in this game of love, with Lord Harrick as the prize. He had not seen much of the world; he was young, and at twenty-three the most sensible young men are unphilosophical enough to marry for love; to them love is all-sufficient in itself, they never stay to reason where the grand passion is concerned.

The viscount was not the wisest of young men, and the chances of his yielding to her influence were therefore greater ; he was dull and placid, yet sagacious and strong-minded enough to follow out his own will where his pleasure was concerned.

Then both his parents were dead : he was his own master ; his guardians had no longer control over him ; his nearest and only relative was his grandmother the old Duchess of Dewshire, whom he saw about a dozen times in the year and who would have but little influence over him.

Everything seemed to aid her in her chances of success ; here she had a clear ground to work upon, she had a new project to study for, a something worth living to experience.

She put her hands to her face and closed her eyes ; was it after all but a mere mad dream, a hopeless desire, a wild imagery that



made her blood throb and her brain dizzy. The picture that rose before her dazzled and blinded her mental sight, and made her head swim round and her heart beat wildly.

And yet why was it impossible? Were there no Lords of Burleigh now-a-days? Miss Mellon had married a duke, and Miss O'Neil a baronet, and Adelina Patti a marquis, and they were actresses, and she—she was a beggar maid; would this man be her king, her Cophetua?

No, no, it was merely a foolish, childish dream, she thought; her mind taking many changes in its wild uncertainty.

She became a peeress of England and Scotland; she who had often gone without a dinner all day and to bed supperless; she who had known actual hunger when the funds were exhausted, and she was too proud to solicit a landlady's small loan; she

who had to pinch and save and endure many petty miseries, and to suffer little humiliations from the tradespeople with a smiling face and an air of patience ; she who lived up three flights of stairs, in a shabby-genteel room that smelled of cheap cigars, and had a dissipated look in its general belongings ; she who taught music to her landlady's daughters until her head ached, for a shilling a lesson ; she who had never known a home or its comforts, or the sweetness of domestic love and care.

No, she was only an untutored, self-willed Bohemian, with a pleasant face, ready wit, and a smooth tongue ; and her late success with Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson had half turned her brain. So she told herself, striving to preach down this new hope that had taken root in her heart ; and she resolved to think no more of love and Lord Harrick coupled together. This was

only a passing flirtation, which he would probably forget as soon as the door closed upon him.

She took down her hands, which covered her face while she thought, and laid them on the table. Her face was flushed with a faint colour that lit up the delicate olive hue of her clear complexion ; her dark hair, with its tinge of russet gold, was dishevelled, and fell carelessly and gracefully over her shoulders ; her eyes had a serious look very lovely to see. Nature had made her most beautiful. Her delicately-shaped little hands, that had no trace on them of the daily work they did, were stretched out before her, and once more Lord Harrick took them in his.

As he did so the silver bangle on the left wrist jangled musically. Both of them looked at the ornament.

“ Do you ever think of me when you put

this on?" he asked her, more timidly than was his wont.

"How can I help doing so?" she answered evasively. The bangle had begun to resume its beauty in her eyes again, once removed from the sheen of Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson's more massive jewellery.

She felt his hands fasten round her more tightly, saw the light coming into his blue eyes once more, and noted his face slowly reddening.

"Will you allow me to come and see you when you are settled in Mayfair?"

"I am afraid," she answered, resolutely striving to banish all idea of him as a lover from her mind,— "I am afraid my time will not be quite my own; but I shall probably see you if you call on Mrs. Lordson."

"I don't know her."

"But you can if you wish."

"How?"

"She is going to Mrs. Stonex Stanning's afternoon tea on Thursday. You sometimes go there, I heard you say once, and Mr. Newton Marrix or Mrs. Stonex Stanning will introduce you, if you wish."

"I will go next Thursday," he answered, quickly, "though I think the people there are usually too artistic for me. I don't get along with them very well."

While he spoke Capri was looking at his closely-cut red hair, thinking what an abominable colour Nature had made it, and at his round, ruddy-complexioned face that had no expression in particular to speak of, and at his stout, square-shaped hands, which held hers in a firm grasp. She wondered to herself why he had been sent into existence with such an unattractive appearance.

"I should not like to lose sight of you," he said presently.

"Would you not?"

"And—and I hope you would miss me if I did."

"I can scarcely say until you put me to the test," she said, smiling.

"Could you not?"

"No; and I trust you will not give me an opportunity of testing my feelings on that point," she replied half quizzingly, and with her old humour coming back to her.

"Are you jesting with me?" he asked seriously, and with an anxious look crossing his face that almost made her laugh.

"No," she said. "I hope to see all my old friends—you among them—from time to time. I think I should feel very lonely if I did not."

A deeper colour came into his cheeks, and as he stretched across the table she could feel his hot breath on her face.

"Do you know——" he said, and then he paused.

"What?"

"That—that I like you very much."

She did not move, but lowered her eyes.

His face was close to hers now, his breath felt more warm on her cheek; she felt a thrill pass through the hands that held hers. At that moment he would have given half of all he possessed to kiss her. Suddenly there was a step heard coming up the stairs, and Capri rose slowly. He unclasped her hands. They both recognized the accustomed footfall.

"It is Pa," said the girl in an unconcerned way, quietly putting back her chair.

Lord Harrick was disturbed, and muttered something under his breath that had not the sound of a blessing. He wished the gallant captain fifty miles away at that moment.

The footsteps approached nearer ; the handle of the door turned and Captain Dankers entered.

“ Ah ! Lord Harrick,” he exclaimed, taking off his hat with a flourish, and giving a bow worthy of Beau Brummel in his best days.

Never before did the viscount think him such an objectionable person.

“ Punctual to-day,” he went on. “ I think we fixed three o’clock for our lesson.”

And the captain took off the coat which tightly clasped his willowy figure.

“ Yes,” said the young man, going over to the corner at once and taking up his foil. “ Yes, I know ; three o’clock. We are both in good time.”

Capri took up her hat and put it on.

“ Where are you going, my dear ?” said her affectionate parent, elevating his eye-



brows, and regarding her with what he believed was a most affectionate smile, especially assumed for Lord Harrick's benefit.

"I am going to see old Padre Pallamari."

"Very well, my love."

"I shall come back in an hour."

Lord Harrick stepped before her to the door and opened it.

"Good afternoon, Miss Capri," he said, holding out his hand and bowing as she passed.

She placed her hand lightly in his without raising her eyes.

"Good day," she replied.

In another instant the door had closed behind her.

## CHAPTER II.

## PADRE PALLAMARI.

OLD Padre Pallamari lived in a neighbouring street that branched off the Euston Road. A quiet, dingy little thoroughfare that had once seen better days, and now lived on its past reputation for gentility.

It had a faded kind of aspect, and looked forsaken and solitary. All the houses on either side were as like one another as it was possible for builder to build them. They had all the same small doors, painted dark green annually by contract; each door

had a brass knocker, all *fac-similes* of each other; each round-topped fanlight had a little chalk image of a pig, or a bust of Byron, or a painted flower-pot; and many of them had, in addition, a card on which the word "Apartments" was written, prominently displayed.

It strove bravely to be a respectable little street, in its quiet, unpretending way, having its door-steps whitened every morning in the year, and its spotless muslin curtains carefully drawn across the little windows of its best front parlours, to exclude all vulgar gaze—it was even genteel.

A French monsieur lived at No. 3, who taught dancing in various fashionable academies in the suburbs. It was a sight to see monsieur leave his rooms at midday, his beautiful black locks glittering from pomade, his moustaches waxed with an elegance that defied criticism, and gave to his appearance

an air of lofty distinction, his patent-leather boots shining with a lustre that put to shame Day and Martin's best blacking. The whole street agreed he was a credit to it, he was so smiling and polite, he walked so daintily, he bowed so handsomely, and was so generally elegant.

Over the way, at No. 10, a scene-shifter and his wife, who was a theatrical seamstress, lived.

They were most respectable people, too, Mrs. Gubbins, at No. 12, said. They came in late at night, it was true, and carried great bundles in their arms oftentimes, and seldom went to church, either on Sunday or any other day, but these things were part of their profession, poor creatures; yet they were popular, for they gave passes to the play occasionally, of which the street was glad and quick to avail itself, talking about its projected visit to the theatre for days

previous, and wearing its finest clothes when the night came, and the passes admitted it gratis to some seats in the undress gallery of the Ophelia Theatre.

A mysterious old gentleman lived in this street also, who was never seen by man, woman, or child to speak to anyone, who never came out until twilight, and then went no one knew where: who wore a gold-rimmed eye-glass, which he was never seen to use, suspended from his neck by a dark blue ribbon, and who was believed to be a little wrong in the upper story, but quite quiet and genteel.

He had the front pair in No. 8. Some one once said he was a marquis who had left his friends, and now lived in disguise, because the next heir-at-law strove to get rid of him by giving him a poisoned nut after dinner, which he was saved from eating by having an anonymous note, bidding him beware,

thrust secretly into his hand just at the very instant when he was about to raise the poisoned fruit to his lips.

This story gained wide popularity with the street, until Mrs. Gubbins said that little Miss Banks, the dressmaker, who was very romantic and read the *London Journal* weekly, had got that story from her favourite magazine, and had somehow mixed up the characters of the marquis and the mysterious lodger inextricably.

Indeed, the street was rather displeased at finding the old man was not, after all, a marquis, whose life had been almost miraculously saved by a note from "an unknown friend," and after a while it went boldly over to the idea that he was the injured peer; his gold-rimmed eye-glass, which he was never seen to use, with its blue silk ribbon, was almost sufficient to prove he was; so the street declared little Miss

Banks was right, and the mysterious lodger became from that hour, quite unknown to himself, an object of public interest.

It was altogether a snug neighbourly little street, that had its foreign musician, in the guise of an Italian organ-grinder, to visit it every Friday night, and soothe its mind with selections from "La Fille de Tambour Major": the air of a popular comic song, and a droning hymn.

Old Padre Pallamari lived at No. 13, at the top of the house.

"It is near heaven, mia figlia," he once said to Capri, when the girl had said the ascent of four flights of stairs was too much for him—"it is near heaven; we have all difficulty in reaching there," and the old man laughed over his joke, and shook his brown head merrily enough.

He was a great favourite with the children—for even this street had children—

little models in themselves of respectability and general gentility. They had learned to call the old man padre, and their shrill English tones pierced his ears, but touched his old heart all the same. He was on friendly terms with the whole street; the women liked to see him passing by, his old brown wrinkled face ever covered with pleasant smiles. Little Miss Banks always stopped the noise of her sewing-machine to salute him through the open window with *buona journa* or *buona sara*, two phrases which he had taught her, and which caused her to be regarded by the street generally as a talented linguist.

Even the mysterious lodger, who was never before seen to recognise any of his neighbours, once raised his hat to him, and old Padre Pallamari ever afterwards, when they met, had something pleasant to say to the supposed marquis.



Pallamari was indeed the father of the street; he had grown to love his title of padre, and waited to hear it upon the children's lips when he came out amongst them.

Once, when he was in Miss Banks' room having a friendly cup of tea and a social gossip with the kind-hearted little woman, she had called him *caro mio padre*, and in a moment of enthusiasm and gratitude the old man had raised her hand to his lips. She thought she saw tears in his eyes.

An attic room up four flights of stairs was his home: it was his world. It served him as bed and reception-room. Here he received his pupils, when they chanced to come to him, with the air of a prince and the simplicity of an artist, so that they forgot it was an attic bed-room, and not a *salon*. He kept a fire burning in it summer and winter; the fire seemed to him a friend

into whose cheerful face it was always pleasant to look. It was useful, too, for culinary purposes, for the padre was his own cook, did his own marketing, waited on himself, washed his own linen, knitted his own stockings, and was altogether very comfortable and happy in his attic, and almost as independent of the outside world as Robinson Crusoe was on his desert island.

Capri had known him ever since she came to London, a brown-faced little foreigner to whom everything in the city was new and strange and detestable, and when she could not speak a dozen words in English.

Fortunately for her, her father had lived in the same house with old Pallamari in those days, and Capri at first sight looked on the old man, who was one of her people, and spoke her own tongue, as some one sent by Providence specially to save her from

the utter misery and loneliness which threatened to break her heart.

The dark-eyed, wilful Southern child had brightened the old man's life, and brought him back a thousand happy memories of his own land and earlier days, which he had believed buried in his heart for ever and ever.

The padre was her friend, her father. She still remembered how he comforted her by his gentle words, his kindly smiles, his talks of Italy, in those bygone days of her grief, when her heart yet bled from the parting with the friends of her childhood and the scenes where her young days had gone by ; days that were pleasant as a dream of heaven.

How tender and gentle and good he was ! He taught her English, and the sounds so harsh to her ears gained something of music falling from his lips ; by and by he gave her

lessons in music ; she had already sung, and had, he said, a voice sweet as an angel's. And how he had played to her up there, shut in from all the world, played on his old sweet-toned violin until the music rose like the prayer of a soul in trouble, floating upwards to God's feet, till but the echo remained in mid-air.

In those days he was her comfort, her stay, her only consolation ; she thought she would have died if it were not for him.

Capri's mind went back to all the past as she sought the old padre this afternoon. He must be the first whom the news of her good fortune should reach. He would rejoice with her, she knew ; he was sympathetic, he knew her better than anyone else in the world. He was more of a parent to her than the captain ; he was the truest friend she had in life. How glad he would

feel now to hear of the good luck which had befallen her!

She pictured his delight as she ascended the flights of stairs in No. 13, and in anticipation heard him congratulate her again and again in his kindly, voluble, enthusiastic way.

"Come in," he said, in a cheery voice, when she rapped at his door.

She entered the apartment which he called his home. It was a square room, a little bare, yet with a look of comfort, because of the fire, and a big arm-chair, a little rugged, but very snug for all that, and some strips of carpet and coloured mats thrown here and there upon the floor.

It was somewhat dark, because the window was high and set in the deep embrasure of the wall; but it was the padre's home, and to him it had no imperfections. Here he had laboured, he had given voice to his

dreams, his hopes, and sorrows through his violin. It had the sanctity of association for him.

A very little will often create heaven in an attic for an artist or Bohemian.

A square of Persian carpet, a faded velvet curtain, a copy of an old master, the white sensuous body of a plaster cast god or goddess, a quaintly carved chair, and a copy of Dante, Shelley, and Walt Whitman will make a paradise for which children of art oftentimes would not exchange a palace.

Padre Pallamari had not many of these things, but yet he was happy in this home of his, bounded by four time-stained walls.

Just as Capri stepped up to him he was busily engaged in spreading a coarse, spotlessly clean cloth on the table, preparatory to eating his dinner. When he saw her he uttered a long-sounded "ah!" his face brightened, and he held out both his hands

to her in welcome. To him her face was always a pleasant sight.

She went over, folded her arms around his neck gently, and affectionately kissed him on either cheek. The old man's eyes brightened, his features lit up with pleasure.

"Ah, mia figlia," he said, almost smothered by her embrace.

When she had released him he continued,

"Let the old padre have the pleasure of eating his dinner with you."

"Thank you, padre," the girl replied, nothing loth.

She took off her hat and sat down on a box that often did duty as a chair, whilst the old man laid the table, and presently took a savoury-smelling stew from the pot on the hob.

It was a light palatable dish, cooked as only Italians can cook, and made up of many vegetables, much oil, and a little meat.

Capri just then thought it delicious, though eaten off a cracked plate of no particular pattern, and with a three-pronged steel fork that had long ago lost its handle. It was far more enjoyable than Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson's lunch, though it was served on painted plates, and the glass of sherry she drank was half a century old.

"After all," she thought, as she faced the poor old Italian, "after all Bohemianism is a very happy thing. Bohemia is a pleasant land enough to live in if one could only curb one's fancies and desires and live contentedly within its pastures; what a pity I find it so hard to do that; the world tempts me, I suppose, the world or some one whose name I'll not mention."

She wondered if she were about to leave this merry land, and all its careless, good-hearted, happy people for ever. She had often wished to do so, and, now that the



possibility of its fulfilment was at hand, she felt sad and reproachful.

The delight Mrs W. Achilles Lordson's offer gave her had died away for a time. Now that she determined to leave this glad republican state, where liberty and good nature flourished to a luxuriance unattained in any other phase of society, a sense of sorrow touched her that softened her manner, and made her more gentle, and winning, and lovable than she had been for months before.

She did not tell the old man a word of the news which filled her mind, until they had quite done dinner; then she tapped her handleless three-pronged fork upon the plate and commenced quietly,

"Padre, some good luck has happened to me."

"Cara mia."

"I came to tell you first, even before

Pa, because you are my truest friend."

"Figlia mia."

"And you I hope—I know will be glad."

"I shall always rejoice with you, Capri," he said, raising both his hands.

"Dear old friend, I know that," she replied, looking into his bright brown eyes, full of kindness and love for her.

"What is it, my dear?"

"I am going to be very happy."

"Ah, I know. You are about to marry, and you have not before told the old padre, but he has eyes and sees, he has wits and guesses your secret, he has a heart and feels pleasure for you and the handsome young artist who is so brave and clever and good."

"No, no, no!" cried Capri, turning red at the reference to Marcus Phillips. She was inclined to feel angry at the old man's words.

"No!" he said, taken aback, but he did not feel inclined to give up his point soon. "Ah!" he continued, his eyes sparkling merrily as a new thought entered his mind, "I have it now, cara mia."

"What is it, padre?"

"You have just made the grand discovery that you have fallen in love. But the old man had seen it long ago. Believe me he is sharp, very sharp is that old man."

"Wrong again," she said, smiling at his sudden look of disappointment.

"I can guess no more. What is it?"

"I am going away, to live as companion to a rich woman, an American."

"Going away!" he repeated, starting up, his eyes expressing sudden surprise and grief. "Going away!"

"Yes; going away from the Euston Road and Pa, but only to Mayfair."

"Ah, my daughter, you relieve me," he said, drawing a long breath.

"Is it not good news?" asked the girl, wondering that he did not congratulate her.

"She is rich?"

"She has offered me a hundred a year."

"Sacré !"

The old man raised up both his hands to Heaven. A hundred a year! It was a fabulous amount to him. It was wealth. He rushed forward and embraced Capri, and the brave good-hearted old fellow laughed and cried almost in the same breath.

"You will become a great lady," he said, the tears still standing in his dark eyes.

"My little Capri will become a fine lady."

"I shall become a companion, a human machine without a will of my own."

"But you will be rich. You will have a hundred a year."

"Which Pa will be good enough to take charge of for me," she answered, laughing a little bitterly.

"You will live in a great house."

"No, the house is small, but splendid."

"Sit down and tell me all about it, *figlia mia*," he said, coming over to her, and taking a chair beside her. He kept one of her hands in his.

"Well, I was first shown into the drawing-room," she commenced.

"And that?"

"Has furniture upholstered in yellow figured satin."

"*Sacré!*"

"A velvet carpet; white background, with purple passion flowers."

He threw back his head and raised his eyebrows.

"Curtains of yellow satin and old lace," she went on.

“ Superb !”

“ Piano of ebony and gold.”

“ Ah !”

“ A Greek vase.”

“ Magnificent !”

“ A cabinet which belonged to Catherine de’ Medici.”

“ How fine !”

“ Old porcelain.”

“ Sublime !”

“ Flowers and plants in the balcony.”

“ Glorious !”

“ And a new page in the hall.”

“ Ah ! it is Heaven.”

He made a fresh gesture with every exclamation. His eyebrows travelled quickly up and down his wrinkled forehead, his fine dark eyes expressing continual wonder.

He had lived so long in his little attic that he almost forgot the outer world. This room had been his home, his own

special sphere ; a room which bounded all his care and hopes, his joys and sorrows.

He had almost forgotten what the *beau monde* was like ; all his early life was merely a dream to him now ; there was nothing to remind him it was a reality, and not a shadow, but the picture of his dead Rosalie, with an eternal smile upon her parted lips, hanging above the chimney-piece.

Capri's description was like a page of the "Arabian Nights" to him, a vision which he could never see, for he would live up here in his attic until the long night came for him and he slept for evermore ; live up here alone save for his violin that spoke to him like the voice of his dead Rosalie, in tones that no other ear might interpret ; his violin to whom he poured out his soul here in the almost unbroken silence of long and solitary hours.

And Capri was going away from him,

Capri whom he had learned to look on as his daughter, to whom all the love of his faithful, warm, old heart was given; she was going away to another life amongst different people, and he might see her no more, never at all events as the same charming, child-like, wayward, impulsive Bohemian Capri. Ah! never again.

"It is all beautiful, cara mia," he said, "very beautiful," referring to her description.

He silently brushed away some tears out of his dark old eyes, tears that trickled into the crevices of the brown wrinkled lines in his old face, and ran down his cheeks.

"And the good signora, what is she like?"

Then to cheer him Capri gave a comic description of Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson, and told him she was very fat and wore a dress of ruby satin, and covered herself with the glory of many jewels; at which he



held up his hands and laughed and said something about the body of Bacchus, which remark was not at all appropriate to the person of Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson.

Capri told him too of Mrs. Lordson's adoration of art, and of her special delight in the painters of the "per-Raphaelite" school, and a little anecdote of the statue of Venus de' Medici, and many other things, until the old man was quite merry once more and almost choked with laughter.

"Ah! it is droll," he said.

"Is it not? We live in strange times."

"You will kill the old padre with laughter, my dear."

"Well, I will spare your life a little longer."

"And she worships at the shrine of art?"

"Not only that; she is about to become one of the priestesses in the temple of art. She will reign as the patroness of genius."

"You jest."

"It is true; it requires no knowledge of art whatsoever to become its patron now-a-days."

"Sacré! they are strange, the English."

"The grave-digger in *Hamlet* said they were all mad."

"He was wise, my dear."

"You will come some day and visit Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson."

"Never."

"She may make you the fashion."

"The saints protect me."

"Nay, you must come and play the violin to her some day; she will be charmed."

"Never."

"And she will get you engagements in the West End drawing-rooms. You will be sure to interest her, padre mio. I shall say you are the last of the Cenci family, and, to impress her with a sense of the im-

portance of your antecedents, I shall read to her Shelley's great tragedy of *The Cenci*. Leave all that to me. I shall do the verbal painting of your character, so that when you come you will be regarded as a lion."

"Ah! heavens, you jest!"

"No, I am quite serious. A lie, Byron says, is but the truth in masquerade. And the means would justify the end."

"My dear, that is false; there is nothing like truth."

"Perhaps not; but it is not always agreeable. However, you will come and see her when I am there."

"Cara mia, I know these people of America well. I know them, I have seen them in Rome long ago. They are the men who talk aloud and spit out in our churches, look at the old masters through an opera-glass, and call the ciceroni 'boss.' They are the women all loud colours and

jewellery, who think our palaces barracks, our princes beggars, and our Colliseum an exhibition of ruins arranged for their benefit.”

“Caro mio padre, they have improved since then.”

“May be they have—it was time.”

He paused for a few moments, as if his thoughts had taken a new direction, and then raised his eyes to her face.

“Ah! well, so you go away to this grand lady for ever,” he said.

“No, not for ever.”

“So you think now, my daughter.”

“What a little wretch you must believe me, to say such a thing. I shall often come back here and see you.”

He smiled—a grim sad smile it was—and shook his old brown head.

“Ah!” he replied, “you never come back, you who go away, you never come back again.”

"That is unkind, padre," she replied, pouting her little mouth, and glancing reproachfully at him.

"Never the same, cara mia; you will come back never the same," he persisted. "You go away out into the world that is bright and good to young people, and very pleasant, and the world changes you; gives you new thoughts, new likings, and a new heart instead of the old one and simple. You meet with new faces, and you forget old friends. It is ever the same—ever the same."

Capri was touched as she listened to him. Some inner consciousness told her this was the truth which the old man spoke, ay, the truth, though disagreeable. Her whole nature was touched, for she loved Padre Pallamari, who had been her best and truest friend when she was friendless and neglected.

"Dear old padre," she said, in a sweet low voice, putting her soft delicate arms gently round his neck and kissing his forehead affectionately. "I shall never, never forget you. You have always been so good and generous, you have been more to me than my father."

"Mia figlia," he said with a sob in his husky throat.

"I shall come and see you often, indeed I shall; and you must promise to come and see me whenever you like. A little distance cannot make such a difference, cannot divide us. Mayfair is not so far away."

"Ah! cara mia, it is not the Mayfair which will divide us, but the world."

Capri, with her arms still round his neck, patted him on the shoulder, and promised afresh to see him often, and to write to him.

He was so lonely, so generous, so simple,

like all noble natures, that the girl at that moment mentally wished he loved some one more worthy of his kindness and affection.

She had never remembered him, or any of her friends, never considered what they might feel at her going away, when Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson had asked her to come to her as her companion. She thought only of herself and her future prospects and gain, and the recollection of this selfishness came back on her now with a feeling of pain and self-reproach.

Why did people care for her, she wondered, when she was so ungrateful for their affection, and could not care for them with equal love.

Then the remembrance of Marcus Phillips flashed across her mind. Would he rejoice with her good fortune, or would he feel grieved, and think with the old padre that the world would separate them ; make her

like him less than she did now, or think of him less frequently? Should her residence in Mayfair make any difference between them?

“Poor, dear old Marc,” she thought, “he thinks me far better than I am; if he only knew what a hard-hearted, selfish, miserable creature I really am, and how little heart I have left!” then she gave a quick, impatient sigh.

She was recalled to herself by Padre Pallamari’s voice.

“Ah! well, Capri, I am glad of your good fortune, very glad, my dear; I was a foolish old man to say these things, and we shall think of them no more,” he said, making an effort at being cheerful, for he saw how sad and self-reproachful her eyes looked at then.

When he spoke, his low musical voice, with its kindly gentle tones, went to the



girl's heart; she felt a lump gathering at her throat, and her eyes grew dim. She strove bravely to keep her tears back; there was no use in crying.

"I shall come in every day until Saturday," she said.

"And Saturday?"

"I commence my new life in Mayfair."

"It will be a new life, my dear."

"The old one was happy enough sometimes."

"And other times?"

"Miserable."

"I hope the coming one will be bright and fair for you, cara mia."

"I know you do; and now I must go and tell Pa."

"He does not know yet?"

"No."

She said no more, but kissed the old man on either cheek and quickly left the room.

The old padre sat down quietly after she had gone ; then he looked at the face of his dead Rosalie with the calm smile still on her parted lips.

“ Ah ! they all go,” he said aloud, “ and they come back to us never more.”

He took his violin from its case in the corner and drew the bow across it once.

“ You will never leave me,” he said, almost in a low whisper, leaning his cheek softly against the violin,—“ you will never leave me.”

His tears fell hot and slow upon the strings.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE CAPTAIN SPEAKS LIKE A FATHER.

WHEN Capri went home she found her father in a meditative mood, sitting in his shirt sleeves, smoking one of Lord Harrick's cigars and sipping whisky and water with an air of placid contentment.

The captain was a man ever ready to take his ease at his inn, or anywhere else where he possibly could. At the present hour he lay back in the great arm-chair with a sense of luxury, his knees crossed, his feet in slippers, ease, his eyes half closed, enjoying the flavour of a cigar whose like, take

it for all in all, he might never meet again. His mind was in thorough repose, evidently helped into that condition by the aid of the whisky and water he had imbibed.

Lord Harrick had gone, and Capri knew that none of the other pupils were expected before eight o'clock, so she thought this the best season to broach the subject of Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson's offer.

"I suppose you have had your dinner, Pa?" she commenced in an amicable tone.

"Yes, I had something out," he answered, taking the cigar from his mouth and letting the fragrant smoke escape from between his lips slowly, as if he enjoyed it thoroughly.

The "something out" meant a good dinner, of which he was particularly fond, as Capri knew; he never neglected himself in this respect, yet she asked the question

by way of paying him a little delicate attention which might have a conciliating effect.

She sat down at some distance from him, and watched him carefully for some time. The captain was in himself a study worthy of a philosopher. Capri sat looking at him, thinking of all the years she had spent with him, and wondering how it was that no close or tender tie bound them together in a common bond of affection and sympathy.

She, his only child, had little in common with him, had little respect for him ; and he who should have loved and cared for her had let her grow up without ever giving her the slightest signs of interest, and none of affection.

Had he cared for her poor mother? she asked herself ; had his love for her outlived the first fever of his passion? She feared not. Perhaps this was the reason, he had so little affection for her.

"There is no use, however, in thinking of the past," she said; "let bygones be bygones. My life shall take a different course in the future."

"I have been to Mayfair," she commenced, "and seen the American lady; she has a handsome house."

"Plenty of money, I daresay; all the Americans have," remarked the captain, remembering the gay companies of transatlantic visitors he had shown the sights of Naples to in bygone times. "All these Americans have," he repeated; "they are rich people and hospitable."

He was thinking of the dinners and suppers to which he had been bidden in the past pleasant time when he lived abroad by friendly Yankees.

"I daresay she has plenty of money; she has made me an offer——"

"Offered you a loan?" said the captain,

brightening up, for Capri's words fell pleasantly on his ears.

"No," answered the girl irritably, half ashamed of the question.

"What else?"

"She has asked me to live with her as companion."

The captain took the cigar from his mouth and sat upright in his chair.

"To live with her as a companion!" he repeated.

"Yes."

"And you?"

"And I accepted at once."

"Without consulting your father, or knowing what his feelings might be in the matter, or caring what this step might cost me?" he began indignantly.

"The salary was good," she went on, taking no notice of his indignation, but holding out this excuse, which she knew would turn away his wrath.

"How much?" he asked quickly, and in an altered tone.

"A hundred a year."

The captain lay back in his chair and gave a long low whistle, expressive of surprise. Capri saw the mention of the salary had the desired effect in tranquillizing him, and remained quite calm, waiting for him to make the next move.

"A hundred a year! A splendid offer. I may say, indeed, a liberal offer!"

"Such a one as I may never again receive in a life-time."

"You are right. Shakespeare says, 'There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.'"

"This is my tide perhaps."

"And you may be right, after all," he said in placid tones.

"I thought so, and acted on my thoughts."



"You are an extremely sensible girl for your years!" he said, inclined to be pleased at everything she said, "extremely sensible."

"Experience teaches us all."

"And," he continued, not pretending to hear her last remark, "delays are sometimes, in cases like this, extremely dangerous. You probably thought of that when you at once accepted the lady's offer without consulting me."

"No," she said bluntly. "There was no necessity on my part for delay."

"The only necessity would be to consult me."

"Who, I foresaw, would feel quite satisfied."

"You did?"

"At the prospect of the salary."

The captain's face fell. He looked grave, and turned away his eyes. He was silent for some time, puffing at his cigar slowly,

and now and then wetting his lips with whisky and water while he thought.

If Capri were removed from his hearth and home, would that sever any influence which he held over her now? Once separated from him, she would recognize his authority no more, he feared, not that she obeyed it much now, but in the future she would have money; the sum of eight pounds six shillings and eight pence would be paid to her monthly. He began to wonder how much of that salary, which of course a girl could never require, would fall to his share. Probably he could make good terms with Capri now, and to accomplish this he must, on second considerations, commence to throw some obstacles in the way of her accepting the engagement.

He slowly resumed his cigar, smoked in deliberate silence, and then commenced solemnly.

"However liberal and generous Mrs. Lordson's offer might seem to you, I thought that you would have hesitated about accepting it until you had consulted with me. It is a duty which a daughter owes her parent—her sole surviving parent," he added, remembering that the last words had an appealing effect, and helped to round off a sentence in fine rhetorical style.

"Well, Pa," the girl answered honestly, but not without a slight infusion of bitterness in her tone, "I have, up to this time of my life been left so much to myself to do as I liked without care of any kind, that, if I failed to remember your interest in me now, I must be excused."

The delicate irony struck the captain, but he warded it off carefully with his verbal armour.

"Until now," he remarked blandly, "you had not come to a period of life when a

parent's advice and guidance were necessary."

Then he arranged his moustache carefully for some time before continuing.

"If I have heedlessly let you do much as you pleased," he remarked, with emphasis on the last words, "it was an error caused by affection rather than want of paternal care."

Capri smiled and thought,

"Poor Pa, how he acts even before me ; I suppose that is how acting comes so naturally to me ; I inherit my mother's face and my father's powers of acting, two good gifts by the way for which I should be grateful to Dame Nature. And yet I wish, oh, how I wish, he had been a different man, I might then be a different girl."

The captain saw the smile which crossed her face at his words, and guessed what direction her thoughts had taken, and thought it better to change his tone again.

"Your accepting this lady's offer will leave me very lonely, quite solitary in life, indeed, quite solitary," he said with a pathos which the whisky and water had done much towards inspiring him with.

"But you see so little of me you will scarcely feel the change," she answered, "we see but little of each other from morning until night, and you know we have little in common with each other."

This he knew to be true, yet he was not going to relinquish his ground just yet.

"That may be," he said, "but a man's home is lonely without the face of a relation, or the familiar features of even a friend, not to put the case in stronger words. Though I may see little of you," he continued, looking at her reproachfully, "still the mere knowledge of your presence is a comfort you can little imagine."

Capri could not indeed imagine it; she had never before heard a word from him which could lead her to think she was of the least interest to him.

"Very well," she said quietly, growing very tired of the conversation, "very well, then, I shall stay at home with you."

She stood up as if she understood an end had come to their conversation, and her staying at home had been finally decided on. She had not the faintest idea of altering her determination to accept Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson's offer, but she believed her prompt announcement of submission to his wishes would bring her father to say what he really meant; all his previous expressions were, she thought, but the words of a part which he was carefully playing.

"No, no," he said, "as a parent I could not bring myself to do you such an injustice, indeed, I could not, my dear; it would be

a wrong to you, and a selfish one on my part, in which I could not indulge by any means," he continued, remembering the promised salary of a hundred a year.

"As you like," she said, with affected indifference.

If he was playing a part, why should she not do so likewise?

"This is an offer the like of which you may never receive again; and at your present age my home is not suited to you as the daughter of an English officer. Whilst you were young it did not so much matter, but now it is different. No, I will not allow my affection to stand between you and your prospects."

"Besides," said Capri, with a merry light in her eyes, "we could not always live together; one of us might marry, and then the other would leave."

The captain thought it best to ignore

this piece of unseemly levity ; he made no reply.

“ Your salary,” he commenced, after another meditative pause, “ will be more than you shall require for your wants, my dear.”

“ You shall have the half of it, Pa,” the girl said quickly, anxious to spare him any self-respect he still retained.

“ God bless you, my dear,” he said with emotion, “ you have always been kind and thoughtful to your old father.”

Capri was not conscious of ever being so, but she made no answer.

“ Then it is all settled,” she asked aloud.

“ Certainly, my dear,” he was flowing over with amiability now.

“ Mrs. Lordson wants me to go to her on Saturday.”

“ Very well,” said the captain with a sigh, finishing his whisky and water, and smacking his lips afterwards.



"And, Pa," she said, quite merry once more at having gained her point so quietly, and at their agreeing with such mutual satisfaction, "if you really do feel lonely after me, why——"

"What, my dear?"

"Get married again," she answered laughingly.

The captain looked grave.

"Capri," he commenced.

"Oh, I will give my consent," she said, repressing the smiles that sought to break over her face, "only please yourself, and I will never interfere with you where your affections are concerned."

"My dear."

"And I will come to the breakfast and cry, 'bless you, my children.'" With a sagacious nod to her parent she quickly left the room.

When once outside the room her humour

changed. Her face became serious and almost grave, a tender light came into her dark eyes, smiles were no longer on her lips.

"Poor Marc, I wonder what he will think," she said aloud.

## CHAPTER IV.

GUY RUTHERFORD APPEARS.

WHEN Capri had left Lord Harrick, to visit old Padre Pallamari, the young viscount went through his fencing lesson in an absent-minded manner, for he was yet thinking of the girl's bright winning face.

He never spoke much to the captain during his lesson, but on this occasion he was almost silent, and answered the military man's remarks in monosyllables. Before the time for his lesson had expired, he said he was tired and had enough of fencing for that day ; he put up his foil and, offering a cigar

to the captain, bade him good day and went slowly down stairs.

He lingered a quarter of an hour in the Euston Road, hoping to see Capri returning, and then calling a cab drove to his club in Pall Mall and walked to the reading-room. Here he knew he was not likely to be disturbed. The room was almost empty.

The daily papers never had much attraction for him, but to-day they had even less than ever.

Politics interested him but little, and the records of passing events still less. The world might metaphorically turn upside down, but it could make no great difference to him; he would still retain his accustomed level.

People might go on getting drowned, or killed, or swallowed up in mines, or burned, or married, or buried by earthquakes;

science might make the most startling discoveries, which men would first call mad, and afterwards hail as wondrous; art produce fresh marvels; philosophy evolve principles even wilder than had hitherto dawned on men's minds; but none of these things could touch him personally.

They were outside his province. The daily papers could tell him nothing that he cared to read about, so he entertained an utter disregard for them, and went on in the even tenor of his way, undisturbed even by the most startling bulletins, served in the most sensational manner which the editors of evening papers could devise.

However Lord Harrick went to his club daily. It was a convenient place to lounge about; he played billiards there occasionally, met acquaintances and friends, and strangers that sometimes interested him; stared out of the windows at the continual

stream of human life flowing to and fro on its ceaseless ways below ; had lunch there, sauntered about the smoking-rooms, and made it, in fact, a place of general convenience.

To-day, when he entered the club, he did not, as was his wont, go to either the smoking or billiard-rooms, but walked straight to the reading-room, and sat down in a retired corner near one of the windows looking out into Pall Mall.

Just then a great many thoughts entered his head, and presented themselves to his mind in rather a confused state. It was unusual for ideas to act in this way towards him, they had never been guilty of doing so before, and now he was somewhat disturbed.

However, he did not resent the intrusion, but let his reflective powers take their course. Reflection to him was a novelty. His agent,

his servants, and his friends usually spared him that trouble, and made up his mind for him on the respective subjects which came within their various provinces, and generally with considerable satisfaction and profit to themselves.

Now, however, a matter for thought, on which he did not care to ask the advice of any of these faithful servitors, presented itself to him face to face, and at first he was quite unable to meet it; yet, though it bewildered him, he was not willing to escape from its presence.

He was thinking of the possibility of making Capri his wife. Her pale, olive face, with its wonderful eyes, sweet, liquid, and tender, haunted him. What a lovely woman she would develop into in a few brief months! What winning, charming ways she had! No woman's memory had ever so haunted him before, or woke those strong

feelings within him such as now stirred him with a subtle force.

He could not read or smoke or talk, he could only sit there and think of this handsome, wayward girl who had so suddenly lit a spark within his heart that now sprang to flame, and gave him no peace or rest.

Should he make her his wife? Why should he care what society or his friends would say? Hang his friends; a man must please himself, and not them, especially in a matter of importance like this. True he would consult his friends, or ask their opinions, if he were about to buy a horse or select a house, but this was a far different matter. He had no immediate relatives to trouble him about any step he might think well of taking. He had never known his mother's face; he scarcely remembered his father; he was completely master of himself.

He was very much alone in life; how



much so he never felt before ; now this fact dawned on him suddenly for the first time ; he was quite of an age to think of settling down and marrying ; he was twenty-three. He wondered this thought had never struck him before. It was certainly time for him to make a home and take to himself a wife. It was a duty he owed himself ; but that this wife should be an obscure girl, whose father was a fencing-master, and who lived in a couple of back rooms in an unsavoury road, was a very different matter. There was the rub.

What would society say ?

True he cared little for what is known as society. It was to him a word that conveyed but little meaning. Society is a body of people who make their own laws, such as they are, have their own ideas on certain subjects, and their own prejudices almost impossible to conquer. Yet for its laws,

opinions, and prejudices, he cared but little ; he could live independently of them, but would his future wife be satisfied to do so likewise. What to a man is of no importance, is frequently the breath of a woman's life. Lord Harrick was quite conscious of the fact that mothers and single daughters looked on him as a special prize in the matrimonial lottery, and "made up to him," as he termed it, in all kinds of ways and through all sorts of subtle devices.

The knowledge of this fact was forced even on his unobservant mind by long experience ; he believed that almost every girl who approached him beheld in him solely a man who was destined to become an eligible husband, who might possibly by some wile or charm be made to offer her his hand and title.

He knew that in their regard it did not matter much if he were as profligate as Don

Juan, as base as Judas, as repellent as the public executioner. He had a title, which would completely cover all sins were they redder than scarlet; he had money, which would guild all shame, and render it bright and attractive in the eyes of the world at large.

All this rendered him rather tired of the society of the fairer sex belonging to the upper ten thousand, none of whom had ever interested him or touched his heart as Capri had done.

"This girl," he thought, "never tries to please me. I like her for that somehow; the others are all so deuced civil; they like everything I like, they hate everything I hate, they are determined to agree with me in everything, and they smile at a fellow when there is nothing to smile about, and are always turning up where a man does not want them. Now Capri does none of these

things, and does not seem to care for me so far, and I like her for that, though it's seems odd of me to do so. She is an awfully winning girl, and I am sure I should be happy with her, happier than I could be with any other woman, and settle down a steady kind of man, if she would marry me. Would she, I wonder? Perhaps there is some other man whom she has seen and likes better; but she is young yet, and has not opportunities of seeing many others; she may like me. When I took her hands to-day she did not withdraw them, that is a favourable sign; and she wears the bangle I gave her, and when I asked her if it reminded her of me, she said how could it help doing so. I would have spoken to her, only for the captain coming in just at an awkward moment."

He fell into a dream of happiness, in which he pictured himself a contented,

happy man, with Capri as his wife. The *Telegraph*, which had rested on his knee, fell to the ground at his feet unheeded; he stared out into Pall Mall as heedless of what was passing there as the man in the moon.

Whilst he was lost in thought, a man a few years older than Lord Harrick strolled, rather than walked, into the reading-room, a man who was destined by Fate to play no unimportant part in the viscount's life.

This man was Guy Rutherford.

His face was tanned by exposure to tropical suns, his small, perfectly-shaped head was covered with crisp, brown curls, his eyes were of grey-blue shade, deeply set under the square low forehead and straight brows. In the shadow his eyes looked royal blue, in the light they were grey.

The lower portion of his face was rather

full, his mouth, which was a little sensuous perhaps in its expression, was covered by a tawny moustache, his neck, full and shapely, supported his head with an exquisite grace ; it was the neck of a marble divinity.

Altogether his appearance was more striking than handsome ; his face was one that left an impression on women when far better-looking men were overlooked and forgotten.

The softness of great sensibility was in every feature, which gave his face an expression that might readily have been misjudged for effeminacy, but that the firmness of the chin corrected the first opinion. His was a countenance that bewildered those accustomed to read men's faces as books.

It had a combination of tenderness and strength, of good and evil, of delicacy and force, of happiness and pain. Not that

these expressions were apparent at once ; one after the other, as he spoke or thought, they flitted across his face brief as lightning flashes, but sufficient by their force to reveal the outlines and shade of characteristics before unknown, unsuspected.

His figure was tall and straight as an arrow, muscular yet slight, and perfect in its outlines. When he moved or stood his limbs fell into natural poses that had something voluptuous in their grace, and reminded one of the traditionary beauty of the athletic youths of Greece.

Turning from one paper to another without paying attention to any, as if they bored rather than interested him, he came at length to that corner of the room where Lord Harrick sat indulging in his day-dream.

This man with sunburnt face started a little as he recognized the viscount, smiled

to himself, showing his white teeth, and advanced a step closer.

"Harrick," he said, placing one hand on the viscount's shoulder, and stretching out the other.

"Hallo ! Guy," said Lord Harrick, starting up and grasping the outstretched hand heartily and with genuine pleasure. "Who would have thought to have seen you here ?"

And they shook hands again and again, for they were old friends.

"Not you at all events, I suppose."

"Certainly not."

"When I last wrote to you I was in Egypt."

"Yes ; that was more than a year ago, if I remember rightly."

"I have lived there since."

"And how long have you been in town ?"

"Only two days."



"Sit down, Guy, and tell me all about yourself."

"My dear fellow, I have so little to tell. A man does not change much in five years."

"Sometimes."

"Ay, sometimes ; that is true."

"And you have changed."

"One seldom recognizes an alteration in one's self ; the process is so gradual."

"You have got over a lot of ground since."

"I have," he answered, somewhat wearily.

"I am like the Wandering Jew. I may be a descendant of his. I would claim him as an ancestor, if I knew the old man settled down, and had a family. He is just as respectable, and far more ancient than the Norman robbers whom I am said to spring from,"

"I suppose so."

"I meant to have looked you up, Harrick."

"You did?"

"But Fate has spared me the trouble. She is usually kind to me."

His voice was low, with a peculiar clearness in the accents; it had an undertone of music, like rhythm in verse.

"And what is the strangest thing you have seen since?"

Guy Rutherford laughed.

"Shall I tell you?"

"By all means."

"I have seen nothing more surprising than something I have come across to-day."

"In all your travels?"

"In all my travels."

"And that?"

"And that was Lord Harrick indulging in thought."

He laughed aloud, putting his hands on his friend's shoulders, and looking into his face. Lord Harrick laughed too, but look-

ed conscious-stricken and made no reply.

"Come," said Guy Rutherford, seating himself opposite his friend, with a careless, easy air. "Come, tell me all about it, old fellow. I know, from past experience, you do not often indulge in this luxury. It must be caused by one, or all, of three reasons."

"What are they?"

"Either your wife, if you have one, has eloped——"

"Wrong. I am not married."

"You have lost your mistress."

"I have no mistress."

"Then it is the worst of all. You are in love."

"Nonsense," said Lord Harrick.

"Unbosom yourself to an old friend," said Guy Rutherford lightly, "and tell me all about it, old fellow."

"I see you have not lost your old habit of bantering your friends."

"No? I told you I was not much changed."

"Do you know, I wish you would live at home, as an Englishman should. Turn a respectable member of society, as the saying goes, and—and——"

"Get married."

"You might do worse."

"I tell you what it is, Harrick. You want me to share your misfortunes."

"Misfortunes?"

"Yes. You have fallen in love, old fellow. Deny the soft impeachment, if you dare? Well, I knew it would come to this some day. You are going the way of all viscounts, who are sent into the world to marry, beget heirs, that in due course and in turn support the honour and glory of the British aristocracy, and, having fulfilled this glorious mission, are removed by Time to a comfortable shelf in the family vault."

"What nonsense you talk, Rutherford!"

"Truth often lies in nonsense."

"Have you any engagements for to-night?"

"No. You see I have only been in town two days," said Guy Rutherford, as if apologising for being free, "and, with the exception of a visit which my tailor has promised to do me the honour of paying at six o'clock, I am quite at your service."

"Then dine with me at my house in Park Lane to-night at eight o'clock."

"With great pleasure, my dear Harrick."

"And then we can have a quiet smoke and a long chat afterwards. I want to hear all about yourself and your travels."

"All right, old man."

"Eight o'clock."

"I shall not forget. I am anxious, too, to ask you after many people whom I have neither seen nor heard of for

the past half dozen years during my absence."

"I have an appointment at five," said Lord Harrick; "but, if you have spare time before dusk, you can do one thing which I would like."

He paused, as if he had not considered what he was about to say.

"And that?"

"Merely to humour a whim of mine."

"What is it?"

"Go to the Grosvenor Gallery and look at a picture there—number seventy-nine—the 'Beggar Maid' it is called. I know the original, and merely want to know what you think of the beggar girl's face."

"I will go."

Lord Harrick got up and shook hands.

"Good-bye till dinner," he said, and left the room.

When he had gone, Guy Rutherford sat

down once more, rested his head on his right hand, and thought.

There was no doubt Lord Harrick was in some mental state of confusion, out of which his friends could not help him, otherwise he would never have had recourse to thought. Harrick, he said mentally, was a right good fellow, who was never troubled with a serious idea in his life. If circumstances in the present hour drove him to think, it was unkind of Fate.

Now what was it that made him think? He never gambled; he seldom bet. Even if he did both these things, and lost money, it would make no difference to Harrick, who could never feel the loss by any possibility. There was only one thing which could make him think: of course he was in love; but with whom?

That was the point of interest. What manner of woman had succeeded in win-

ning his heart? What was she like—like—could it be the face of the picture he had asked him to see in the Grosvenor Gallery, number seventy-nine, the “Beggar Maid”? Harrick had said he knew the original, and no doubt the original was the lady of his heart.

Having come to this sagacious conclusion Guy Rutherford jumped up.

“The sight of this picture will give me a key to my conjectures,” he said. Then he smiled. “Poor Harrick,” he continued, “I must go and see this modern marvel that has made you think.”

He got into a cab, and drove to Bond Street.



## CHAPTER V.

## LOOKING BACKWARDS AND FORWARDS.

LORD HARRICK had known Guy Rutherford at Harrow, and afterwards at Cambridge ; and though there was little which harmonised in their characters, yet they had always been what is known as good friends.

Guy Rutherford, like the viscount, was almost alone in life ; he had few relatives living, none of whom were of close kin. Both his parents had been slain in the Indian Mutiny whilst he was yet a baby, then being reared in England by some friends.

Clever, bright, courageous, and original, he was as a boy always in trouble with those who ruled the destinies of Harrow School, for of all things on earth he hated discipline ; and he never knew what obedience meant.

The beaten tracks he held in lofty contempt, and, whilst he read with avidity, it was to please his natural thirst for knowledge, and not in compliance with the wishes of his masters.

At Cambridge his studies were erratic and fitful ; he scorned all ideas of taking out degrees. He seriously alarmed, and indeed scandalized, a very respectable don, by offering to burn sacrifices to a statue of Silenus holding the infant Bacchus, a *fac-simile* of the Borghese marble which he had in his rooms, and before which he also swung incense and sweet-smelling, aromatic herbs.

He wrote a satire in Greek verse on an

unpopular proctor, and cruelly exposed the ignorance of a pompous dean, and altogether the university was by no means sorry when he departed from its sheltering wings.

He was just twenty-one when he left college, and, freed from the restrictions of all guardianship, he determined to shake the dust of English soil from his feet, and travel abroad. In vain his late guardians spoke to him of the duties of landed proprietors, and the obligations of Englishmen to their tenants. Guy Rutherford had an estate on the borders of Cumberland which he seldom saw, and which brought him an income of a clear eight thousand per annum.

It was now five years since he left England. During that time he stayed in every capital of Europe, strayed here and there, backwards and forwards, just as the whim or caprice of the moment led him. Everywhere he went there was some fresh attrac-

tion, some new pleasure. All his days were spent in an enjoyment that feared or knew no monotony. It was all delightfully fresh, and the sense of freedom and ease he enjoyed was utterly unlike anything he experienced during the days of his minority in England.

At Paris, Vienna, and Rome, his name was familiar in foreign mouths. At once young, handsome, winning, and wealthy, society had opened its doors, and extended its hands to him everywhere. There was a nameless something in his presence which at once attracted, a subtle power in his manner which soon fascinated. The light in his eyes, the smile on his face, the grace of his bearing, were forces which won their way wherever he appeared.

He was the favourite of the Paris *salons*, the straight-browed, dark-eyed women of Austria smiled upon him, and the hearts of

Roman maids and matrons went out to him unsought. Women seldom looked upon his winning, handsome face, without experiencing that interest which is often the forerunner of passion ; and his memory remained long after his presence had left them.

Foreign society would have certainly spoiled him sooner or later, if some great change had not come to him, which caused him to leave it all suddenly behind him one morning, and go—no one knew where. He was staying at Vienna then, and the women of that fair city, seeing themselves deserted by their favourite without seeming rhyme or reason, laid their heads together, and discovered a cause for his abrupt departure.

He had fallen in love, they said, with the young Archduchess Vatomie, who was gifted with a beauty fatal to men's souls, and burdened with a husband whose years were more than hers thrice told. But why

had he left? they wondered. Ay, why had he left, and so suddenly? Had he been in love with any of them, they would never let him depart so long as a spark of love burned in his soul. The Archduchess Vatomie must have been silly to let him go, or he must have been stupid, as some of these Englishmen were, heaven help them. If he were in love, and there could be no mistake about that, there was all the greater reason that he should stay near the object of his passion. Could it have been that the archduchess was cold? Scarcely, she was too young to feel cold to such a handsome gallant; and though she was haughty and severe outwardly when she knelt in the church or drove on the promenade, yet there was a smouldering light in her eyes which boded no good to those whom they looked on with pleasure.

But the motive for his departure was yet

left unexplained. It was strange ; but he was an Englishman, and there was no accounting for their acts.

The night before he left he had been more brilliant and looked more handsome than ever. He had been to the masquerade ball given by the English ambassador. He had gone as a cavalier, in pale-blue velvet and lace, a merry, careless smile upon his face. Women had smiled on him, their eyes sparkling with a passionate light under their masks, their lips whispering words that scorched their souls, their fragrant breaths sweeping over his face as they pressed close to him in the shady grove beyond the lamp-lit gardens, with a warmth heavy and sweet from amorous desire, raising their mouths to his in kisses that burnt like flames. He had given them words that lacked the force of passion, kisses that were cold, glances that had no fire in their

brilliancy, sighs that had no echo in his soul. Had some new, strong passion entered his heart, and made these lesser loves seem trifles light as thistledown, made their kisses, and soft murmurings, and gentle caresses, and languishing passion wearisome?

Towards the morning hours a cotillon was being formed. It was to close the brilliant scene of the night's revels. No one there passed through the figures with such grace as Guy Rutherford. A Russian princess had asked for him. She desired that he should lead her through the dance. A search was made through the salons and gardens, but he was nowhere to be found. The cotillon was delayed, yet he never came.

It was then discovered that the young Archduchess Vatomie was also missing. Everyone was in a state of suppressed consternation but her husband; everyone



but he noticed her absence. He was quite undisturbed. The friends of the young archduchess were delighted beyond measure; they prepared themselves for a new scandal, than which nothing could be more refreshing just then, when the record of each others' sins was becoming tedious as a thrice-told tale.

The Archduchess Vatomie had not yet fallen, "at least, so far as they knew," said the gossips, whispering in the corners with cheerful smiles upon their lips, whilst they nodded mysteriously, not inclined to give her the benefit of a doubt. "So far as they knew, but then one should never be surprised at what happened," and this time they waved their fans, and looked at the archduke calmly taking snuff near the doorway.

The archduchess had been proud, and cold, and haughty, and never took an inter-

est in the scandals concerning her dearest friends, which was unjust and unkind of her ; and repulsed lovers, and strove to be better than her neighbours, but now at last the moment had come when they were avenged, for of course she had gone away with the handsome Englishman, and they could never see or recognize her again.

However, when the cotillon was finished, the archduchess was found seated in an alcove of the balcony quite alone, her face pale, a weary smile on her lips, a strange look in her great dark eyes.

Her friends regarded each other with looks of blank astonishment ; they bit their lips and whispered to each other, shaking their heads.

But the fact remained that she had not gone ; after all their expectations of a fresh scandal with many delightful details, very shocking, and only to be listened to because

of the moral lesson they afforded, here she was going home quietly with a husband who might have been her grandfather.

It was a cruel disappointment.

To make matters more complex, Guy Rutherford was not seen again. In the morning it was known he had left Vienna. No one knew where he had gone.

The Archduchess Vatomie went to church and took the holy water from her husband's hand, which quivered a little from age, much as usual; if there was any change, it was that her attendance was more regular than before. Her black lace veil was more closely drawn across her face, perhaps her steps were more listless than of old, and her smile was like a mockery of pleasure upon her lips.

It was strange, the gossips still said.

One day she was missing from church and public promenade, and it was soon known that a violent fever had seized her,

which threatened her young life. It was a fever of the brain, said the physicians, but the husband said it was but the result of a cold.

Be that as it may, it increased very rapidly. Gossips said the archduchess had revealed many things better kept quiet in her delirium, when the gates of reason were unhinged and her mind wandered abroad in strange ways.

The struggle for life was brief; perhaps life had become worthless to her.

She died one night with the sound of an English name upon her lips.

"Guy, Guy," she cried, half rising in her bed, her dark eyes dilated, as if she beheld some sight invisible to others, her face upturned as if for a long, last kiss, her bare arms outstretched.

Another moment and she lay back, folded her arms above her breast tenderly, loving-

ly, as if she held some precious burden there, then spoke the name once more and went to sleep for ever and for aye.

Six days afterwards Guy Rutherford returned to the Austrian capital, pale, haggard, and worn, with the scared look in his eyes of one who had seen a ghost.

He drove straight to the gates of the palace which death had visited before him. The place was silent; a dreary spell hung over it; the shadow of the dark angel yet hovered about it; she whom he sought had gone hence.

An old man bent down with sorrow had told him the news; without a word he left, without resting he departed from the city again.

Since that time the suns of Africa had scorched and burned his skin. He was sick of civilisation and its ways; he panted for change. He spent his days amongst strange

races, on the bronzed, arid plains and yellow wastes of Egypt, where the burning sands swept in golden clouds above him, where no brown patch of shelter was to be found from the fierce crimson suns that scorched the flesh and made the blood seethe in the veins.

After two years of this life, a longing to see some English faces, and grasp friendly, English hands, and hear the once familiar sound of the English tongue again, came upon him with a force all the stronger that it had spared him so long. He was half ashamed of submitting to this feeling of home-sickness, yet he turned his face towards Britain once more.

It was much the same to him where he lived now ; he had no hope to live for ; no anchor to chain him to any particular spot upon the globe ; the world lay all before him, and so he returned to England

after an absence of over five years, old in experience, bronzed from travel, and with that acquired polish which a meeting and mixture with many men can alone give.

By eight o'clock he was sitting opposite Lord Harrick at dinner. It was a snug little room, well lit with wax lights, and redolent with an air of comfort which only English rooms possess. The dinner was the inspiration of a French cook; the wines were old, and sparkled temptingly. The two friends faced each other across a dining-table, as they had not done for years before; both felt a general sense of satisfaction and pleasure in each other's presence. Save for the servants they were alone.

"How strange it seems to me you have remained here in England ever since, Harrick, while I have been drifting about the world backwards and forwards, knocking

myself against all kinds of odd corners in life, like seaweed flung about at the pleasure of the waves, whilst you have remained here as quiet, and solid, and stationary as the lions in Trafalgar Square."

"Yes, deuced strange," said the viscount, across the table. "In those five years you have met many strange people."

"I have; and I have lived at least twenty years; and you——"

"Well, I cannot say I have lived more than five."

"What have you been doing all this 'while?"

"Well, I have stayed in town during the season, gone to my club daily, rode in the Row, put in an appearance at the House occasionally, and all that sort of thing."

"And out of season?"

"Asked some men to shoot with me in the autumn, or to Harrick for the fishing,



and so on. To look back on it, I never know how the time has gone by; though it hangs heavily enough on my hands sometimes."

"And you call that living?"

"What else am I to call it?"

"Well, perhaps after all you are right. Of course you take some interest in the state; like politics, visit your estates now and then, and meet your neighbours and friends in the little circle known as society. I am not sure that you are not right, and yours is not the better way of living, Harrick."

Guy Rutherford paused, and looked down at his plate.

"You are wrong, in some of your statements, my friend; I have no particular interest in the state or in politics, and I care but very little for society."

"That is rather a loss if you live in

England ; abroad it does not so much matter."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes, here where you are so eminently dull and sober, politics keep one interested ; it is a pleasant, healthy game to look on or play at, just as good as lawn-tennis or any other pastime, perhaps more exciting when you have not a dull minister or a weak cabinet ; and then society always interests when it does not bore ; it is a perfect comedy, and deserves careful study."

"I never thought of it in that light before."

"Now that you think of it you agree with me?"

"I do."

"As for me, the life I have been leading is well enough. I am a thorough Bohemian in my tastes and habits. I have no great interest in my existence. I have not yet

found the cue to my life. I don't care two straws for society, I hate politics, and my tenants and people are all looked after by an agent whom I have never yet seen, but who understands them far better than I, and makes a living by this superior knowledge."

"And how do you pass your life abroad?"

"It is impossible to explain. Out of England things interest us which your thorough, solid Englishman could never condescend to notice, could never unbend himself sufficiently to enjoy. We live for art, and love, which is in itself an art, and for pleasures light as air, and as impossible to describe."

"Yes, that is all very well, until a fellow reaches the age of five or six and twenty years, then he begins to look about him, and thinks of settling down."

"Just as dogs and other domestic animals

do," replied Guy Rutherford, laughing merrily at the viscount's words.

"You are not serious."

"I am indeed."

"How then do you intend to pass your days?—always in wandering about without a home, without a domestic tie, almost without a friend, save those whom one meets in crowded rooms and foreign hotels, and whose friendship is not worth the purchase of an hour?"

"You are becoming quite philosophical, Harrick."

"And you are becoming quite ironical, Rutherford."

"Well, I beg your pardon, old man; but really the life I lead suits me best. I think it was Epicurus who said men's passions were the winds that blew them across life's sea. That is the pleasantest way of getting across that great dark space; and I am

quite satisfied to be wafted over by such winds."

"I hope you are jesting," said Lord Harrick, raising a glass of hock between him and the glare of the wax lights that rested on the centre of the table.

"Don't look so serious. Why, it is you who have changed, and not I, since last we met."

"Believe me, Guy, you should settle down; marry and settle down."

"I fear I can never do that."

"Why not?"

"I seldom know what quietness and peace are. I have been always a restless kind of individual. There must be something like quicksilver in my blood. Dear Madame Errante said it was the *feu sacré*, the poetic temperament, and that she possessed it likewise."

"Who was she?"

"An admirable creature. She had three husbands in as many years. Number one shot number two through the heart in a duel; number three in good time ran number two through the body with his sword. She was a lovely woman, Harrick, with a divine face; she had a voice like an angel singing out of heaven, and a soul like another angel living out of hell."

The servants had by this time withdrawn. The two friends lighted their cigarettes and commenced to smoke.

"I never knew you had a poetic temperament, Rutherford. I was ignorant of your being a poet," said Lord Harrick.

"I am ignorant of it to the present moment. One may never write two lines of verse, and yet have the sacred fire in his veins. It scorches the blood, I think, and makes one different from the generality of his sober, solid neighbours. It is a per-

petual flame, to which the blind, round-limbed god's torch is but a spark at best."

Guy Rutherford lay back in his chair, and laughed again.

Lord Harrick was silent for a few minutes, then he broke the silence by saying,

"Tell me, Guy, seriously, have you seen no woman you could wish to make your wife?"

Lord Harrick fixed his round, blue eyes on his friend's face in a questioning gaze as he leant across the table. For a moment Guy Rutherford's eyes met his in a glance which Lord Harrick could not interpret. The question woke to life a new light in his friend's face, that died out as quickly as it came.

"There is no woman living whom I would care to make my wife," he answered.

He lowered his head; there was no smile now on his lips, his voice was low and seri-

ous, and Lord Harrick noticed the shadow which passed across his face.

"Speaking of women," he said presently, rousing himself as it were from a reverie, "I went to see that picture in the Grosvenor Gallery—the picture of the 'Beggar Maid.'"

Lord Harrick was silent. He was most anxious to know his friend's opinion of Capri, and yet he hesitated to ask any questions.

Rutherford poured himself out some wine, and drank it with a slow deliberation that was torturing to his host.

"The 'Beggar Maid' is a handsome girl, —I never saw a more lovely face, Harrick," he hesitated just for a second, and then added slowly, "save one."

"Where did you see that one?"

"Abroad; and there is a strange resemblance between the two faces that I cannot define, but which haunts me somehow."



He was silent again as if thinking deeply, then he asked abruptly,

"Is the original of this picture—for I think you said you knew her—a foreigner?"

"I know her," replied the viscount, much relieved by what his friend had said, "she is the daughter of a retired English officer."

"She does not look like an English girl."

"Her father was married abroad to a Neapolitan."

"Ah, I thought she had a foreign look."

"She was born on the island of Capri, after which she is called."

"You interest me already; Capri, Capri, what a pretty-sounding, musical name!"

Resting his arms on the table, Guy Rutherford waited to hear anything more about the girl which his friend might reveal. Lord Harrick smoked on for some time, then in a confidential tone went on,

"The fact is, Guy, I have fallen in love

with the girl. I came to meet and know her in this way."

"I am all attention."

"I take fencing lessons from her father at his rooms; I saw her there continually; few men could see her, I think, without falling in love with her."

"Judging from her face I can quite believe that."

"At all events, I fell in love with her long before I was aware of it. The fact only came to my knowledge a few weeks ago."

"How?"

"In this way. I got the skin rubbed off my arm whilst fencing; it commenced to bleed, she tied it up for me, before she had finished I knew I was desperately in love with her."

"It sounds quite romantic. I should never have thought that you went in for romance, but we never know what pleasing

surprises our friends have in store for us ; however, seriously speaking, my dear Harrick, let me ask you, has the young lady any other relatives besides this father, who is, I gather from your remarks, a—a fencing master.”

“No,” replied Lord Harrick, briefly, “he is her only relative.”

Then, after a meditative pause, he continued :

“There is nothing derogatory in a man gaining his living in this manner, if he has no other way of getting it. It is true they are deuced poor, but what does that matter ?”

“My dear fellow, I am the last person in life to object to a man because he has not a balance at his banker’s. I have rubbed too many prejudices away in knocking about the world to retain this thoroughly English one.”

"I know that," he answered.

"But, having fallen in love with this girl, what do you intend to do? What, have you decided, is to be the sequel?"

"I intend to go on loving her."

"A very pleasant occupation; but, let me ask you, do you propose marrying her, or——"

"I mean to marry her," said the viscount, shortly, as if anxious to interrupt his friend.

He had not quite made up his mind, up to that time, whether he would offer Capri his hand, or see her no more, and strive to forget the passion she had awakened in him. Now, however, Guy Rutherford's question seemed to provoke a decisive reply, by which he meant to abide. He had drunk more wine to-night than was habitual to him; his face was flushed, and he felt, much stronger mentally.

"Certainly I mean to marry her," he

repeated, as if to sustain himself in his decision. "I shall be proud of such a wife. There is not a handsomer girl in all England. You do not know her, Guy. She has the most winning ways of any woman you ever met."

"And I have met many."

"But none more winning than she."

"Then, my dear fellow, if you think she will make you happy for life, marry her by all means."

"I intend doing so," said Lord Harrick, who, at the same time, was grateful that his friend should advise him to a course so acceptable to his own views and inclinations.

"A man," said Guy Rutherford, speaking in a serious tone—"A man never made a greater mistake than to heed what his friends say or think when he has made his choice."

"I agree with you there," said the young viscount, yet more pleased.

"If you are unhappy, what does society or the world care?" continued Rutherford, philosophically. "If you are happy, what need you care for them?"

"Let us drink to her health," said Lord Harrick, filling both glasses.

"The health and happiness of the future Viscountess Harrick," said Guy Rutherford.

Lord Harrick started a moment at the sound of the name, then laughed aloud. They stretched across the table to chink their glasses, and so violently did Lord Harrick's glass come in contact with his friend's that Guy Rutherford's glass split, fell from his hand, and lay smashed on the table.

Neither spoke for a moment; the crash had occurred so suddenly that both were surprised, Guy Rutherford somewhat startled.

"Don't mind ; fill up another glass," said Lord Harrick, laughing a little nervously.

Rutherford did so.

They both raised the wine to their lips, and drank to Capri's future happiness. As Guy laid down his glass, he saw that there was blood upon it.

"The broken glass has cut my fingers," he said, as he wrapped his handkerchief around them. "I am not so lucky as you to have some one near who would bind them up for me."

Lord Harrick laughed as if his friend had made the best joke in life.

"I wish I had the same chance of falling in love as you had ; circumstances favoured you, Harrick."

"Now that you have come back to England, you must stay and give yourself the chance of falling in love, old fellow."

"If I honestly did, I think it would make

me a better man, it would give me some purpose in life, something for which to live."

He rose from the table as he spoke, and prepared to depart.

"All in good time," said his friend, following him out into the hall.

Guy Rutherford held out his hand and said good night. The light of the lamp fell full upon his face, and Lord Harrick saw it wore a tired, careworn look.

"Good night," he said. "Shall I see you to-morrow?"

"I think not; I intend going down to Cumberland to play the part of an English squire for a week or so."

"How glad your tenants will be!"

"Will they? I'm afraid they will be rather disgusted. I'll walk to my hotel; it's a splendid night. Good-bye, old fellow."

"Good night."



## CHAPTER VI.

## LOVE TOOK UP THE HARP OF LIFE.

A WEEK after Lord Harrick and Guy Rutherford had dined at the viscount's house in Park Lane, Marcus Phillips received a letter from Mrs. Stonex Stan-ning.

It was early in the morning when the missive arrived. The artist was up betimes ; he had taken his breakfast and commenced to work on a canvas, the subject of which was of much interest to him.

The sunlight came in through the attic studio window in a broad beam of glory that brightened the artist's heart and lit up

the room, showing its bareness with a realism that was cruel. The studio seemed different, very different indeed from what it was on that agreeable afternoon when Mrs. Stonex Stanning and her friends had come to see his pictures, and criticise them, and drink tea, and talk high art. The square of carpet lent for the occasion had been speedily reclaimed by the landlady; the pot-boilers had gone to various picture-dealers, the chalk studies had been returned to the portfolio, the yellow primroses had faded and died long ago, and Capri was absent.

How different it all seemed now, the young artist thought, as he filled his well-coloured pipe from the tobacco-jar and lit it before taking up his palette preparatory to work. He could well believe that it was all a dream, but that one happy circumstance reminded him it was a reality; that circumstance was the exhibition of his pic-

ture. That picture, he believed, would help him in the present and the future; it had indeed already helped him in a measure, for it had made his name known to the crowds who stared at it daily, made it known to the press who criticized it, and to that share of the public which plumed itself on being learned in all things concerning art and artists. Already it had gained him a better price for his pot-boilers; the dealers had begun to treat him with more attention, one of them who had rejected his canvases over and over now wrote to him to say he was prepared to make him offers for any pictures he might send.

Marcus Phillips began to feel himself a rising man. He had written his name in full in great red letters, at Newton Marrix's suggestion, across the corner of the "Beggar Maid" picture, and he resolved that every canvas he sent out should now bear the

same signature, and should, moreover, prove worthy now of any eminence that name might attain in the future.

He had begun to tire of the pot-boilers, which were often crude sketches, little better than studies, outlined on the inspiration of a moment, and dashed in without thoughtful study; most of them as inferior work as his natural genius and true artistic sense could possibly turn out.

True, they had brought money in, money he was frequently absolutely in need of; they had proved good friends to him, and he would always entertain pleasant and grateful recollection of them; but, if this picture of the "Beggar Maid" sold well, he should have no future need of them, and he believed and trusted it would meet with a liberal purchaser: and he then resolved to paint no more pot-boilers; he determined that good, careful study is alone

worthy of an earnest mind and a true artist, so he would turn out no more work in the future which did not strive to excel. And the future, what might not the future hold for him !

He was yet young ; and youth is mercifully seldom without hope.

Whilst the blue clouds of smoke slowly left his lips, and vanished by slow degrees in the air, the young artist suspended his brush and indulged in a day-dream.

He saw himself in the future working carefully and steadily, gaining ground, slowly perhaps, but surely ; his name coming continually before the public, the offspring of his imagination hanging in massive frames upon the walls of various galleries.

He took a pleasure in thinking of all this, not so much for his own sake, as for the sake of one who, he believed and trusted, would share this celebrity with him. To

give her a name famous in art, to secure for her a home made beautiful by all that art could supply, and happy as love could make it, this was surely an object worth living, worth toiling for in the present.

The thought of having Capri, with her beautiful face, her soft sweet voice, as his wife and companion for life came to him with a swift delight that reflected a happy radiance on his face. Truly, with Capri as the angel of his home, no man could ever be more blessed.

The thought of her beauty came like a glad vision before him; he saw her dark liquid eyes so full of tenderness, of light, and vivacity; her rich clear olive face, her classic head, with its wealth of dusky gold hair; her form so full of grace in its very careless movement, all rose before him and dazzled him.

He heard her voice, full of music, that

was glad and sad by turns, suiting itself to every thought she expressed, harmonising itself to every mood of his.

“Ah, Capri,” he said aloud, “you little know how well I love you.”

He loved her, but did she know that he did? He felt that her woman’s quickness, her swift intuition had fathomed that knowledge which he had no desire to keep secret from her: that she had long ago made the discovery that her love was the highest happiness which life could hold for him.

Though in words he had never told her that her affection meant heaven and earth to him, surely his eyes, his acts, his whole bearing towards her did. A man is quick to express such a feeling as this, even unconsciously, and a woman quicker to interpret it, quicker to read in trifles light as bubbles on the surface the secrets which hearts hold.

He would not tell her of his love until it was in his power to offer her a home worthy of her. It was not yet possible for him to give her that independence which he wished his wife to enjoy ; but that he trusted would come soon now.

Already he had gained the first step on the rugged pathway of success, and now with a brave heart, a strong arm, with hope and courage he would push on firmly, and secure independence and fame.

It would be but happiness to toil for her sake, to labour on faithfully and unwearily with such a goal in view as Capri's bright face to greet and cheer him after strife and struggle. Surely that would be a blessed reward.

No shadow of her mercenary words, her ambitions, her worldly philosophy, came across his mind as he sat there dreaming of Capri. He only thought of her as she ap-



peared at her best, a winning, wayward girl, budding into the sweet flower of womanhood, full of gentle ways and tenderness; full of faith in the man she loved, true-hearted, noble, and good.

Lover-like, Marcus Phillips clad the girl who had gained his heart with many ideal attributes, exaggerated all that was good in her, diminished all that he believed unworthy of her, and idealised her until she stood before him as one of the most bewitching women that ever God sent on earth.

He was rather glad that she had gone to Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson as companion, for he believed she would be more comfortable and happy there than at home, and that the exchange was all for the better; and yet, being human, he could not help being jealous. With this rich American woman, Capri would enter into a new sphere of life, she would acquire habits and tastes which as

his wife she might not be able to gratify; she would probably meet with many men who would admire her—none could help doing so. Would she remain the same generous-hearted girl to him?

He did not doubt it for a moment. This new life of hers would but prove a crucible out of which she would come to him by-and-by purer and brighter than ever.

Thinking of it in this light he felt pleased that she had gone to Mrs. Lordson. He believed her stay in Mayfair would give her an experience of those riches and that life for which she longed, and show her that existence holds something truer and nobler than those worthless things on which she now set such store; something which no wealth could buy, no position command, but which an honest manly heart like his could offer, nay, could and would give her as long as she lived.

He remembered now with a keen pleasure how she had kissed him when she came to say good-bye previous to her departure for Mayfair, kissed him with almost the innocence and purity of a child; he saw that her heart was touched, and that there were tears shining in her great dark eyes, though she had laughed and striven to be gay. She had made him promise to come and see her in what she called her new home, and had declared she would always remember what pleasant days they had had together, and what merry, careless hours they had passed in the studio, when she had sat for her portrait and when they were both so poor.

Always she would remember the past; for she assured him, in her bright, half petulant manner, that they had done with it for ever—that they had both shaken hands with poverty, and were now

going to grow rich, and maybe famous.

Marcus Phillips thought that in her words and thoughts she had coupled the future of both their lives, and this thought made him inexpressibly happy, not imagining that she was already dreaming of a coming time in which he had no part, of an existence to which he would be but a stranger.

“And all the good luck comes from the ‘Beggar Maid,’ Marc,” she had said; “it will always be pleasant to think of that.”

He told her that that thought would be the pride of his life, that he should always regard the picture as the foundation of their fortunes.

She had looked wonderfully charming and bright that day, for the dawn of a great hope beamed on her face, her eyes were lit with brilliant expectancy. The artist was perfectly happy in the belief that she loved him, for he measured the depth

of her heart and feelings by his own.

"Ah, Capri, my sweet girl, I would do anything for your sake," he said aloud, as he finished his pipe.

A rap sounded at the door, and woke him from the full blissful sense of a day-dream which he might never enjoy again.

"Come in!" he shouted a little abruptly, half displeased at being disturbed whilst he was mentally so pleasantly engaged.

The maid-of-all-work entered, holding a square envelope in the corner of her apron between her finger and thumb.

"Letter just come for you, sir," she said, handing it out to Marcus.

"Thank you," he said, taking it from her and recognising Mrs. Stonex Stanning's crest on the back at a glance. "An invitation to a reception, I suppose," he murmured to himself in a confidential manner, opening the envelope slowly.

It was not a card however: it was a short friendly note. It said:

“DEAR MR. PHILLIPS,

“If you can manage without too much inconvenience to call on me to-day about twelve o’clock, I shall feel glad, as I have a business matter to speak of which will be better arranged verbally.

“Very truly yours,

“FELICE STONEX STANNING.”

“Business matter!” said the artist aloud, as he finished the letter. “I will swear it’s my first commission I am about to get, through Mrs. Stonex Stanning from some of her friends.”

He danced a step or two, singing and holding the sheet of grey ribbed paper above his head triumphantly. A vision of endless commissions rose before his eyes; rows upon rows of pictures, bearing in their

corners the name of Marcus Phillips, spread before him. Was he about to realise in part the vision in which he had just been indulging?

It seemed so to him just then. The world was lit with hope, and to youthful eyes there is no brighter light in heaven or on earth; radiating the present, it fills the future with a golden haze that may reveal undreamt-of splendours in the coming time. Who knew?

Marcus Phillips was quick to call on Mrs. Stonex Stanning; he was impatient to learn what was the business matter that she wished to speak of to him; he was anxious to know the particulars about the commission, as he believed it to be, and commence work as soon as possible.

He put down his palette and brushes, took off his painting-coat, sadly smudged here and there with colours, and flung it on

a chair, brushed down his long light locks, and made himself look as generally tidy as he could.

Before twelve o'clock had struck he had reached Kensington, and was sitting in the little morning-room of Mrs. Stonex Stan-ning's house. It was a very pretty, artistic apartment, where the foot fell noiselessly on white flossy rugs soft as down; and the easiest of luxurious low-seated chairs were scattered about, piled with cushions of pale green velvet, worked with golden sun-flowers, purple pansies, and dark blue forget-me-nots.

A small conservatory opened out of this room at the far end, the glass doors of which were painted with mediæval, pale-faced saints and patient martyrs, with eyes devotionally upturned, and palm branches held gracefully in their wan hands. The doors stood partly open, and the great crowd of



plants inside gave out a delicate fragrance that filled the air without rendering it oppressive.

Here Marcus Phillips sat wondering what Mrs. Stonex Stanning had to say, letting his eyes wander all over the room, until at last they fixed themselves on an etching which hung on the opposite wall of Mademoiselle Sarah Bernhardt's famous picture, "*La Jeune Fille et la Morte*."

It had an attraction for him which, though painful, he could not resist. He stared at this picture of a young girl, with her round charming face and sweet eyes, over whose shoulder a half-veiled skeleton face looked mockingly, and whose sweeping, half-defined grave-clothes mingled with the dress of the shapely living figure. Again and again he looked away from the picture, yet, in spite of himself, his eyes returned to the same spot. It was a weird subject, yet it attracted.

At length he turned his back to the wall on which it hung, and faced the glad mid-day sunshine, coming through the carefully-shaded window. He had scarcely done so when the door softly opened, and Mrs. Stonex Stanning came forward and greeted him kindly.

There was something in her manner which at once pleased and soothed him ; a delicate gentleness that hinted at rather than expressed friendship. It seemed to the artist as if he had known her not weeks but years. There was an entire freedom from restraint between them, which is seldom the result of a short acquaintance, and not always the experience of a lengthened one.

Her tall figure was draped in a soft, cream-coloured morning dress that clung to her and hung about her in graceful curves and folds ; her bright brown hair was coiled in bands around her shapely head, and

fastened with a string of small pearls, and altogether there was a freshness about her which was charming.

"You have received my note, I see," she said, when she had shaken hands with the artist, and seated herself opposite to him.

Marcus said he had, and that he was glad she had made such a pleasant request, which he was very happy to obey. He was beginning to feel that there was a something undefinable in her manner, in her very atmosphere, that calmed him, and made him mentally a stronger man.

"And now," said Mrs. Stonex Stanning, "tell me all you have read or heard since about your picture."

There was a sunny look in her grey eyes, which the artist caught just then; a light which he thought made them very beautiful. When he looked at them again, Mrs. Stonex Stanning lowered her lashes, and

bent down her head above a vase of lilies of the valley which stood upon the table beside her. Then Marcus Phillips noted how shapely her head was, and how delicately and gracefully it was set upon her neck, but noticed it with very much the same feelings as he would look upon a statue.

Any other man would probably have fallen in love with this woman ; her gentle manners, her soft low voice, and graceful ways were attractions that would have won their way to many male hearts, and quickened them into a warm affection ; but Marcus Phillips looked upon her now unmoved, for the boy-god had bandaged his eyes, and stopped his ears, and stolen his heart, and so the artist was blind and deaf to her charms.

“ I have read so many things, and heard so much about the ‘Beggar Maid,’ that it

would be a difficult thing to remember them all," he answered her, with a merry laugh.

"The press has been much troubled over the picture."

"Yes. One half the critics say the face and flesh-tints are the best part of the picture; the other half declares emphatically the drapery alone is dexterously painted, and that the facial expression is not carefully studied."

"And so the wise judges disagree, and are 'wee of each other.'"

"Exactly."

"You need not mind the press very much," said Mrs. Stonex Stanning encouragingly.

"You are very good to say so."

"The public has declared the 'Beggar Maid' one of the successes of the season. I hear it talked of wherever I go."

"That is very gratifying to me."

"And I have promised more than half a dozen friends to introduce them to you."

"It will give me great pleasure to know them."

"I give a reception on the second Thursday in July. Will you unceremoniously accept a verbal invitation, and come?" she asked. "You will then meet those friends of mine I mentioned as wishing to know you."

"Thank you many times," said Marcus Phillips, who was delighted at the prospect.

He now felt more certain than ever that he was about to become famous.

A few words like these will often set young men dreaming; they are slight foundations, on which they erect magnificent aerial palaces.

The artist's next thought was of Capri. He wondered if she would be present, or if Mrs. Stonex Stanning knew the wealthy

American with whom the girl of his heart was staying.

"You will remember the date?" said Mrs. Stonex Stanning, in her sweet flexible voice.

"Certainly. I shall look forward to it with great pleasure."

She smiled, as if she were well pleased.

"Speaking of your picture," she said, after a slight pause, and with the air of one who was continuing a train of thought. "Is the 'Beggar Maid' a model, or the creation of your imagination — a fancy sketch?"

"She is not a professional model. The face of the 'Beggar Maid' is a portrait of a friend of mine, Miss Capri Dankers, who was kind enough to sit to me."

"She is handsome."

"The picture is said to be a faithful portrait, nothing more."

"Then she must be very lovely," said Mrs. Stonex Stanning quietly.

"She is indeed," answered the artist, warmly.

Mrs. Stonex Stanning looked at him quickly, then saw the colour mounting to his face, and read the riddle of his heart aright, and sighed very softly as she turned her head away; so softly that Marcus Phillips never heard her. She lowered her eyes, a shadow crossed her bright face; she was silent for some time, but Marcus Phillips never noticed her, he was too much occupied with his own thoughts, and did not yet dream that her interest in him had deepened to a warmer feeling; that her heart, so long impregnable in its wintry seclusion, had now awakened to a new sense and a fuller life and had gone out to him without his seeking, and almost without her knowledge.



Of human hearts we have but slight knowledge and less control ; we cannot sound their depths or measure their circumference ; they are mysteries which we can seldom understand ; their ways are ever new to us ; we are powerless to give or take them ; their wilfulness is wholly independent to reason, they ignore our interests, they are despots that blindly follow their own inclinations, knowing that they often rush to misery and ruin. To-day they are free as air, owning no sovereignty, no bondage ; to-morrow or the next day a fatal moment comes, and they are led and bound captives whilst all life lasts.

It is strange !

Marcus Phillips was the next to speak ; he was anxious to know if Capri would probably be present at the reception ; the fact of her being invited would give the occasion additional interest to him.

"Miss Dankers," he said, "is now acting as companion to Mrs. Lordson; perhaps you may know that lady; she is a friend of Mr. Newton Marrix."

"An American?"

"Yes."

"I remember. She came here to one of my afternoon teas."

The artist was pleased to hear this; there was now a greater chance of his meeting Capri here.

"When Mrs. Lordson came here," began Mrs. Stonex Stanning, "Miss—Miss——"

"Dankers."

"Miss Dankers was not with her."

"I believe she only went to stay with her last week."

"Indeed! And where did she stay before then?" she asked, with some show of interest.

"With her father."

“ Her father ?” (interrogatively).

“ Yes ; a retired English officer.”

Mrs. Stonex Stanning took up the lilies of the valley and put them close against her face.

Marcus Phillips began to wonder if it was to ask him about Capri she had written to request his calling on her this morning, but presently she commenced, with rather an apologetic tone,

“ I was a little curious about the picture, Mr. Phillips, on account of something which happened yesterday, and which I thought it best to say to you personally.”

He made no response, and she continued :

“ A friend of mine, who has not had the opportunity of meeting artists or artistic society, being very much struck with your picture, wishes to purchase——”

“ The ‘ Beggar Maid ’ ?”

“ Yes ; in order, he says, to add it to his

collection, and, as he knew I took an interest in the picture, he has asked me to make you an offer for it."

While she spoke, the kindly, gentle look which the artist had first noticed when she greeted him came back into her eyes, but they had a look far graver than before.

"How generous of you to take such trouble!" he said.

At his words a bright light came into her face.

"I do not know, of course, what sum you expect for the picture."

"I have not quite decided on what I should ask."

"My friend has asked me to make you an offer of two hundred and fifty guineas."

"Two hundred and fifty guineas?"

Did he hear aright; he could scarcely credit his senses; at most he had expected half that sum for his canvas, but here

was an offer made him which at once outstepped his highest expectations. This was indeed a good fortune for which he was unprepared.

The mere thought of it made him confused ; a multitude of ideas thronged in wild disorder across his brain, as he pictured to himself the result of this sudden wealth, undreamt of and un hoped for in his most sanguine moods ; here was a price offered that far exceeded his expectations ; it was a glorious beginning, his star was surely in the ascendant. With such a commencement, what might he not accomplish in the future. It was a fair prospect upon which the sun of his fortune had risen so brightly ; if the dawn was so bright and prosperous, what might not the day bring him. A great hope filled his soul.

What should Capri say to this good news ? Would not two hundred and fifty guineas

suffice them to commence their married life on? He, or rather they, need wait no longer. He could at once, if she consented, take her from the dependent position in which she was now, and make her his wife. The idea filled him with pride and delight.

All these thoughts flashed across his mind in an instant. Mrs. Stonex Stanning saw that he was pre-occupied, though he said to her,

"This is indeed good luck; I had not expected such an offer."

"I am sincerely glad," she replied, whilst a look almost of pain came into her calm grey eyes.

"I feel that I owe it to you."

"No, no; you owe it solely to yourself."

"You have come in the guise of good fortune to me, I cannot tell you how I thank you," he said.

"Perhaps you may some day," she answer-

ed unthinkingly; then she closed her lips resolutely, as if she had said too much.

He made no reply, but looked at her in wonder; her shapely head bound with its coils of bright brown hair was slightly bent.

"I have had no other bid for the picture," he said presently.

"You are satisfied then with that offer which my friend has made."

"I am more than satisfied," he replied, "I consider it a handsome sum."

"But the picture is well worth it."

"And you told him so?"

"I did."

"You are indeed a good friend."

He looked at her with a bright grateful glance in his blue eyes; her eyes met his for a second, then her dark lashes fell over them again.

"You had better get the picture marked sold," she said in a moment.

"I shall to-day."

"My friend will send you a cheque probably to-morrow."

The artist thought that this remark was an intimation that their interview had drawn to an end.

"May I ask you," he said hesitatingly, as he stood up, "the name of the purchaser?"

"Lord Harrick."

"Lord Harrick!" he repeated slowly.

He had never seen him, but he had heard Capri mention his name on two or three occasions. For an instant a shadow fell upon his face, but it passed as quickly as it had come, leaving it all the brighter afterwards.

He was anxious to leave the house and be alone, in order that he might uninterruptedly think of his success. The presence of a second person seemed to subdue the delight which he felt at that moment; he



wanted freedom in order to indulge his thoughts without restraint.

“Good morning,” he said, holding out his hand.

His face, lit up just then with hope, was very frank and winning; there was a sunny look in his dark blue eyes, which often afterwards rose before Mrs. Stonex Stanning’s mental vision.

“Good morning,” he said, “and let me thank you once more for all your kindness; believe me I am fully sensible of it.”

“It is a pleasure to me that fate has made me the instrument of bringing you your first success,” she answered, giving him her small, shapely hand.

“It is our good angels that bring us all luck,” he said gallantly.

A faint colour came into her cheeks; and she thought of the words long afterwards.

The door closed upon him, and Mrs. Stonex Stanning was alone.

The fair, young, and wealthy widow sank into a chair, placed her head upon her hand, and fell into a reverie.

What was it in this man that touched her heart, and stirred her deeper feelings till they quickened to a new, glad life, and made her feel that existence held something higher and sweeter and better than she had ever known before? This man, whom she had seen but a few times, of whose history she knew so little, who she suspected was in love with another woman, or rather a girl, if she might judge from the picture, who was just at that most seductive age when girlhood ripens to womanhood.

It was strange. He had touched without knowing it some chord in her heart that sent a melodious echo through her lonely life; terribly lonely all the more that she

was the centre and attraction of crowds ; a chord which no other man's hand had yet struck or wakened.

Do what she would, she could not close her eyes to this fact. It was a truth which persistingly forced its way to the surface. Whenever she looked into her heart, there was the reflection of this new-born love, tender and sacred : a love which must be screened from all eyes, hidden in the sanctity of secrecy ; for with her woman's intuition she felt that the man to whom her whole heart went out, was ignorant of the part he had begun to play in the drama of her life ; that he never even suspected the existence of emotions which he had awakened.

Perhaps even if he did he would be heedless of them, for the thought of another woman filled his heart.

Should he remain blind to the fact for ever that her love was his to cherish

and care for and guard from all the world; his to train round the tendrils of his heart, till it blossomed and flowered in the full warmth of his affection, and sweetened all his days? Should the world as long as she lived remain barren and fruitless to her; should existence become but a mere waste?

Throughout her days in the past she felt, rather than knew, that she had missed something from her life which other women possessed, and held as sweet and sacred; she had missed it, but her days were passed in peace, and the calmness of resignation, and without vain regrets. She had been cold, for the spark had never come till now to fire that sacred flame smouldering, unknown to herself, in the depths of her heart.

Now she learned what that subtle tenderness, that boundless joy was, that had

escaped her for years ; knew the faint, delicious feeling of sweetness, the birth of new hopes, and the brightness that another human life could lend to hers, knew it and was sad ; for that sweetness, the fulfilment of these new hopes, and the fulness of that other life might never be hers to have and enjoy.

With the knowledge of this new feeling, and the sense of this new passion, came a tone of sadness she had never known before. Much of her life had gone by that was wasted and fruitless, and many fair years that could never be regained. Looking back on them they seemed empty and valueless, and she had never dreamt of it, never knew it before. Now the knowledge came to her in full force.

All the store of gentle, womanly love that her heart held had never been touched ; all her tenderest affections had lain as a germ that had never been stirred and quick-

ened to life and light by a passion like that which now filled her soul, and which she was utterly powerless to conquer or suppress.

Hopeless though her love was, it seemed to rise wave-like with daily increasing vigour, and fill her whole being with a sense of its depth and might, and the sound of its voiceful melody.

Did this love awake now but to be wasted on one who was ignorant or careless of it?—would the day ever come when he should turn to her, and wake to a sense of all that awaited him? Should she have to wait through long and tedious years for this, even if it ever came, wait while she played a hollow part in that society of which she was a centre, her heart aching from the weight of its load, whilst she smiled the while, wearing a close-fitting mask before the world, which she dared not cast aside?

And yet, for all this new sadness that came upon her life, she would not, if she could, reduce her heart to its old state of coldness. The knowledge of what love was gave her a new power and strength, and, in one brief hour, woke her to fresh depths of feeling which she had never before fathomed, to a sense of the golden mines of tenderness within her, of which she was all unconscious heretofore.

She would not, if she could, return to her old neutral feelings, though then she was in the possession of a peace which might never be hers again; never whilst this aching void was in her heart; never whilst the one man for whom she alone cared in all the world—this man who was the sun of her whole existence—was unconscious or heedless of her love.

Had she never seen Marcus Phillips, she would probably have been spared a know-

ledge whose fruit was bitterness as well as joy. She might have gone down to her grave with her sweetest, most womanly feelings all undeveloped. She would have been unconscious of the pleasure that mutual love can give, and blissfully ignorant of the grief that an unrequited affection causes human hearts. Would this have been wise and well? Was she a gainer or loser by the wisdom which had come to her unsought?

It is better, after all, to have loved and lost, she thought, than never to have loved at all; and, so saying, she sighed just once, and rose from her reverie.



## CHAPTER VII.

## ABOVE BOHEMIANISM.

WHEN Marcus Phillips was out of doors once more, he felt as happy and sped along as lightly as if he were again a school-boy out for a day's bird-nesting or nutting amongst the pleasant woods. His face was so bright just then that it seemed almost radiant; the passers-by looked at him and wondered what it was made the young man so pleased with the world at large, which was dull and common-place enough to them. His dark blue eyes lost their look of serious dreaminess and were beaming with light, for a great hope filled him with delight and

confidence that made the earth look young and fair, and lit the future with wondrous splendour. He thought the sun had never shone so brilliantly in May before, at least on our island; the air was balmy and sweet, the sky cloudless and azure, and the very people in the street, he thought, looked bright and happy, as if they knew of his success and shared his feelings.

An old woman, wrapped in a tartan shawl, sat at a fruit-stall, on which a little pile of some oranges and gooseberries were arranged with neatness and order that were the outcome of an abundance of leisure; and, as Marcus Phillips passed her by, he thought her just like a picture. Her figure was quaint, her pose most natural, her face sunburnt, her eyes anxious and patient; the hues of her shawl made an effective background against the brighter colours of the fruit.

Even the most common-place things were suggestive to him of beauty, whilst he enjoyed this happy mood. He would like to have made a sketch of her had he time ; as it was, he satisfied himself by throwing her sixpence and hurrying on, merely overhearing disjointed exclamations of her surprise and gratitude.

In his flight further on he saw a little crossing sweeper, with rough hair hanging down over his pale face and bright, watchful eyes, his thin hands crossed on a broom-handle as he rested himself against a lamp-post, his trousers in flitters showing his skinny legs and knees capped with hard crusts of dirt ; and his figure struck the painter as a perfect study, and a subject for one of his future canvases. He stopped and spoke to the lad, who touched his old, worn cap, and put out his hand almost with the same gesture, so much had practice done to

render the action perfect. He looked up into the artist's face with a shrewd, speculative gaze pitiful in such young eyes, as if he were striving to see what manner of alms-giver Providence had sent in his way this morning. Marcus Phillips put a shilling into his palm, sadly dirty and hard as a navvy's.

The lad looked at him with surprise, opening his eyes wide, bit the coin to test its genuineness, and then a smile crossed his poor, pinched, haggard face that reflected itself over the artist's heart and made it lighter than before.

Marcus Phillips then hailed a cab that he just caught sight of and drove quickly to Mayfair. He wanted to tell Capri of the good fortune which the picture—which he regarded almost as much hers as his—had brought him, and that her prophecy had come true in a measure.

He felt sure the girl would rejoice over the news. He fancied her dancing about the room, with her rounded arms raised above her head in a favourite gesture ; or perhaps she would fling one arm around his neck, and kiss him, as she had often done before in moments of excitement or tenderness. He almost felt her kiss already on his cheek, and pictured her bright, vivacious face close to his, undergoing rapid changes of expression as she listened to him ; her dark liquid eyes looking into his with a world of tenderness and love in their depths. Then he thought of Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson, and wondered if she should be present, or if she would leave them to themselves, to enjoy each other's conversation without interruption.

The cab drove up to Mrs. Lordson's house just then ; he sprang out, and rang and rapped vigorously. The boy of many but-

tons opened the door, and was about to usher him up when a young man with a round face, red hair, and tightly-fitting clothes came downstairs. Marcus Phillips noticed that his face was flushed, and that the page, whose movements hitherto were as stiff and pert as if he were pulled with wires from behind by some invisible hands, now flung wide the door with a sweeping gesture, and bowed his page's head low indeed as this other visitor departed.

Then the artist followed the boy, who scarcely condescended to notice his existence, and was led upstairs and shown into the drawing-room. Before his name was, however, mentioned, the artist had time to note that Capri was alone in the room, and that she stood gazing out of the window in an absent-minded way, her head lowered, her arms drooping, and her hands clasped together.

She started as if she had received a shock when she turned round and saw Marcus Phillips; and he felt, in some way which he could not define, that she was uneasy and confused at meeting him. Her face was flushed, not with that soft, delicate pink shade which served to light up her clear complexion, but with a crimson blush, as if some sudden start had driven the blood quickly from heart to head. Her eyes lowered before his, and the artist would have been sorely puzzled at the change in her, if her voice and words had not assured him.

“I am glad to see you,” she said, giving him her hand, not quite in such a frank way as in the olden time. “It is good of you to come and see me, for I know you do not usually like leaving Bohemia in the mornings, when you are working.”

She has changed, the artist thought; but

her manner was more gentle to him than it had ever been before, and almost shy, and this lent a fresh attraction to her ways. Could it be that her surroundings had already altered her, or did she feel that on entering on this new life she must subdue her feelings, as one who had left her old, child-like days completely behind, and had gone out into the world a woman? What a pity it was, if so; if that old charming freshness, and frank vivacity, and impulsiveness were left behind for ever.

It then occurred to the artist suddenly that perhaps he was interrupting some duty which she had to perform for Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson. Perhaps this trifle in itself was the cause of the change. He grasped at every trifle that would account to him for the alteration.

"I have not been working to-day," he said, seating himself near her, "I commenc-



ed in the morning, but I received a letter which made me come out."

"Which made you come here?"

"Not in the first place: my coming here is the result of another visit; but first let me ask you if I am interrupting you in any way?"

"No," she answered, "I was not in the least engaged when you came in. Mrs. Lordson is at her toilette, and that duty occupies her for an hour at least, so we shall have time for a good long chat; and I am anxious to hear all the news since I left."

"I have heard some good news to-day."

"Tell me what it is," she said eagerly, her old expression of pleasure was coming back, the feelings of shyness and restraint were quickly wearing away.

"I came to tell you as quickly as I could," he said, delaying the news as long as possible for the sake of watching the expres-

sions of interest and expectancy that crossed her face, "or as fast as a hansom could carry me, but when I got to the hall below I had to wait until the page had shown out a young man with red hair : imagine my impatience. By the way," he said suddenly, "who was that visitor?"

"Lord Harrick."

"Lord Harrick?"

It was the second time he had heard his name mentioned that day. The sound grated on his ears unpleasantly.

"He knows Mrs. Lordson?"

"Yes, he called early to know if he might drive her down to Richmond to-morrow."

"Lord Harrick," he said, as if speaking to himself, "is the purchaser of the 'Beggar Maid' picture."

A sudden shock shot through the girl ; her olive face paled ; for a moment her breath was suspended, a new light came into her

eyes; she leant back in her chair and placed her hand across her forehead. Lord Harrick, who took no interest in art, and cared very little for pictures, had bought the "Beggar Maid" picture, because it was a portrait of her; that she felt sure was his sole reason. At this thought the blood came rushing back again hot and quick to her temples and face; she lowered her head.

The artist's words had fallen on her ears with almost the sense of a shock. Why had the viscount bought this portrait of her, she asked herself, was it that he was in love with her, genuinely in love with her, that he wanted to have her face continually before him, or—could it be—that he wanted to place this picture among the ancestral portraits as that of his wife the Viscountess Harrick?

"Oh, Marc," she exclaimed, calling him by

his old familiar name for the first time that day, "the news startled me, it was so unexpected, you told me so suddenly," and she laughed a little hysterically as she spoke.

Marcus Phillips laughed outright. He thought it was the news of his success alone that affected Capri. It was not the expression of joy and exuberance and playful mirth which he had expected and pictured to himself; he supposed it was a deeper feeling of pleasure and interest which produced this effect on her; and then no one knew or could foretell what mood Capri would indulge in under given circumstances.

"What did he pay you, Marc," she asked, quickly.

She wanted to know how much he had given for the picture which was her portrait; she thought she could gauge the depth of the viscount's affections by the sum he had paid for the canvas. The artist thought it

was her interest in him which prompted the question, and answered her.

“As yet he has not paid me anything.”

“You said he bought it?”

“Yes; he has made me an offer through his friend Mrs. Stonex Stanning.”

“Which you have accepted?”

“Yes.”

“How much has he offered?”

“Two hundred and fifty guineas.”

She opened her dark eyes very wide, and stared at him in astonishment. Lord Har-  
rick had given that sum because it was her  
portrait. It was well. There could be no  
longer doubt that he loved her. Her suit  
seemed to prosper daily.

She did not think of Marcus Phillips just  
then, or what that sum would do for the  
struggling artist as a commencement in life;  
or how it would serve him to have the little  
coloured ticket stuck in the frame of the

“Beggars Maid” picture, announcing it already sold ; she only thought of herself and of her chances of becoming the future Viscountess Harrick.

The painter sat there before her looking at her face ; noting the look of joy and something like triumph that her features expressed.

Of course it was all on account of him these feelings possessed her, he thought, all because the news of his good luck had come so suddenly upon her. He watched her in silence ; her face, lovely in its every varying expression, was always a sight worthy of study. He did not disturb her whilst she, unconscious of his presence, looked away thinking of what the future might bring her, and building up bright visions in which the artist had no part.

At last her eyes met his, and for the first time she thought of all this sale would mean for Marcus Phillips. She blushed, when

she remembered her own selfishness, and he, noting the colour, attributed it to a flush of pleasure.

"I am so glad," she said to him, "this is good news indeed, Marc. It will make your name. I think the days I so often spoke about and pictured are coming at last, when you will be rich and famous and have all you desire in life."

"Riches and fame are not all that I desire in life, Capri. There is something more than these things which I require."

He looked at her very earnestly, and spoke with slow determination in his voice.

"Riches and fame will bring you everything else in good time," she answered, turning away her head uneasily, and pretending not to understand the drift of his remarks.

"All that I desire is very little, and yet how much," he said, leaning his elbows on his knees, and placing his face near to hers.

"That sounds contradictory," she said, not meeting his gaze, but looking around the room, "does it not? and, by the way, you have not told me how you like Mrs. Lordson's furniture. How it glares in one's face! When I look away from it with tired eyes, I sometimes continue to see great patches of yellow colour before me, as if that shade haunted my sight."

Marcus Phillips took his elbows from his knees, and sat back in his chair, disappointed and displeased at the light manner in which she had replied to his serious remarks. Capri was evidently not herself to-day, he thought, she sounded out of all harmony with her usual character.

A moment ago he was about to offer her his great heart and all the strong honest affections of his manly nature; he was about to ask her to become his wife, and she had flippantly changed the conversation to speak



of Mrs. Lordson's furniture. This had unhinged him, and for the moment made him feel irritable.

"The chairs give me a headache," she went on, in the same tone ; "at first I thought the display they made very imposing, but familiarity has worked its dire effect, and now they sometimes worry me frightfully. When I am here by myself they seem to stand out from the wall with their ebony arms to their stout sides, and their backs to grow like the corpulent persons of city gentlemen in satin waistcoats, and say to me, 'Come, what do you think I'm worth?' So I feel quite subdued when I realise how much they are worth, but I fancy I prefer the old horse-hair chairs at home with all their roughness, and sometimes a sight of them would be an inestimable relief."

Capri spoke after the manner of one who

cares very little for what she says, but speaks for an object. Her intention was to distract the artist from approaching any serious questions as to her future ; she feared that a distinct answer might be required from her now, as to whether she was prepared to love, honour, and obey him through all her days.

So words came to her at will, and, without giving him time to make any reply, she rattled on.

“ Does not the room give you a headache, Marc ? When Mrs. Lordson, in ruby satin, sits on one of these chairs, the effect makes me feel almost sick.”

He made her no answer, but sighed ; and she afterwards thought he had fixed his eyes on her reproachfully.

“ Capri,” he said presently, not heeding her words, “ will you come to Hampton or Kew some day this week, and let us spend a few hours together ?”

“How can I?”

“Get leave of absence for the day from Mrs. Lordson, and let us go out into the fresh air among trees and fields. You know we have promised ourselves that treat for some time, and we will forget all about Mrs. Lordson, and my picture, and enjoy that freedom and happiness which we Bohemians only can relish.”

A new thought had occurred to him before he spoke. He would propose to Capri to spend this day with him, and then take that opportunity when she was more frank and happy, and more like her old self than she was now, to ask her to become his wife; to tell her that she had his heart and his love, and, without her, fame and wealth would become useless to him and life itself but a mere dreary waste.

“We shall go to Twickenham,” he continued, “and have a glorious day on the water.

I will pull you on to Kingston ; imagine how delightful it will be under the shade of the trees, gliding smoothly along with only the songs of birds, the plashing of water, and your voice breaking the silence. You will sit in the stern of the boat, and sing to me, Capri, and in turn you shall pull if you like, whilst I take your place and smoke."

Yet Capri made no answer.

"Let us say Wednesday. Will you fix on that day?"

There was a frank, boyish brightness in his face, a look of pleasure in his dark blue eyes, and a sense of happiness in his whole manner which she was loth to dispel. She looked at him wistfully, and then gave a low, quick sigh.

If only she had never seen or known Lord Harrick ; if this new dream, this wild ambition of becoming his wife, had never entered her head, how happy she could be ; how

she would dance for joy at the prospect of spending a day such as the artist had spoken of with him.

A month ago, and she would have considered it the acme of happiness, she would have felt most grateful to Marcus for the projected holiday; but her life had changed since that time. The current of her whole existence had turned into a new channel. She had since then dreamt strange fancies full of ambitions and vanities; a fever now filled her blood and scorched her veins, and the peace and calmness of her old life had passed away from her for ever.

"You forget, Marc," she said gently, as if to render the disappointment which she knew he would feel, as light as possible, "you forget that I am not my own mistress now."

"But surely Mrs. Lordson will spare you for one day."

"I don't know that ; this is the middle of the season, and every day I accompany her somewhere or other."

"But one day is not much," he pleaded, looking into her eyes. "You just ask her; think, Capri, how happy we shall be, we will forget everyone and everything in the world but ourselves."

"I fear that is not possible whilst we live in the world," she said, looking out of the window wearily, "I begin to learn that since I commenced my new life."

"Why not?"

"You are yet too much a Bohemian to see; and though I have not left the pleasant land of Bohemia very long, yet I have commenced to view things differently from what I did whilst I was one of the careless race."

The light and brightness began to fade from the artist's face as she spoke, a disappointed look came into his eyes.

“ A month ago I could have gone with you and forgotten all the world but ourselves, as you say ; but now I should remember at every step we took that Mrs. Grundy watched me all day through her searching spectacles, in order that she might afterwards say unkind things of me in whispers. A month ago and I would have danced about the room in joy at such a proposal as you have made just now ; the freshness of the country, the great trees in their leafy greenness, the bright sunshine, and a sight of the river and a row with you would have meant nothing short of paradise to me.”

“ Why may it not mean so still, Capri ?” he asked her almost sadly.

“ Well, now I find that a young woman may not go off in the morning, and spend the day with no other companion than a young man. It would, it appears, terribly

outrage the conventionalities," she said, with a smile on her saucy lips, and a slight ring of irony in her voice.

"Hang the conventionalities!"

"With all my heart, Marc; but until the execution takes place respectable May-fair would rise in protest of my spending the day with you, and I must not outrage it, if only for Mrs. Lordson's sake."

"Do you respect the opinions of the world so much?"

"Ah, my friend, the world is wise."

"With the wisdom of the serpent," he said harshly, as he rose and walked to the far window.

"Ah, Marc, I have eaten the golden fruit Mrs. Lordson held out to me, and so I have come to the knowledge of good and evil, and have left my old Eden for ever."

She did not speak in bitterness or irony now; there was a touch of pathos in her



voice. She looked at the young painter and thought he had never appeared to her so handsome and manly before.

"Are you more happy for your newly acquired knowledge?"

"Perhaps yes; perhaps no. I have had hardly time to think yet, but I cannot go back if I would."

"Never return to happiness, do you mean?" he asked her, turning suddenly from the window and facing her.

"No, I did not say that; but I could not go back to my old existence having once known what my present life gives. You know my past days were not all sweetness, Marc; they may have been wholesome, but they were bitter enough sometimes."

"I fear you have changed already," said the painter reproachfully.

"No," she answered lightly, "I don't think I have. You know I have always

entertained practical ideas, but I have only been able to realize what they mean quite lately."

"You set too much value on appearances and on the verdict of the world."

"Not too much ; you must take the world at its own estimation, otherwise you will offend it grievously ; now the world considers its opinions law."

"A law that I should laugh at."

"Therefore you are a Bohemian ; the world at times pets and at times tolerates you ; but you are outside its boundaries, and it never forgets that—never."

"It seems to me, Capri, that a Bohemian's life is not only far happier, but far more honest than the life of your mere worldling," said Marcus Phillips.

"And far poorer," said she, "and that is the old rock we always split on. Now riches buy all things that are beautiful, and

the presence of beauty makes one happy. Is not that true?"

"Happiness lies in the heart, and not in external things."

"You as an artist," she went on without heeding his last remark, "know how much surroundings mean to a nature like mine, at once sensitive and artistic; how much handsome rooms and pictures, and beautiful dresses and ornaments and pleasant faces represent."

"Ay, but there are some things, true and honest friendship, strong affection, undying love, whose absence could never be compensated for by the handsomest surroundings the world can give. Don't let the world deceive you, Capri; don't let it harden your heart, don't let your better self be ruined by its false ways. Believe me, true and honest affection is the greatest boon and blessing on earth."

"I do not quite know that," she said slowly, rising up at the same time, for the conversation touched on a topic she was anxious to avoid, "you cannot know what power handsome dresses or brilliant jewels have on a woman's heart; they are things which recoup her for much she may have lost."

She laughed as she spoke, and for once the rippling music of her voice seemed harsh and out of tune to Marcus Phillips's ears.

He walked over to where she stood in the centre of the room, and said,

"Well, Capri, will you not come with me—say to-morrow or Wednesday?"

He ignored her last remarks as if he did not credit her sincerity in giving vent to such sentiments.

"I cannot indeed," she said, seriously, "I could not even ask Mrs. Lordson's permission."

“If you like I will make up a party and ask old Padre Pallamari—a breath of fresh air will do him a world of good—or Newton Marrix and your late landlady’s two daughters, they will be glad to come.”

She shrugged her shoulders deprecatingly.

“They would bore us to death, and I have had quite enough of them,” she said; “then Newton Marrix is going down with Mrs. Lordson and Lord Harrick to Richmond on Wednesday, I believe.”

“And you?”

“Oh, I shall probably chaperon Mrs. Lordson, I am always included in every arrangement that she makes; I stand in the position of a fifth wheel in a carriage.” She laughed nervously as she finished her sentence.

He did not say any more. He saw that Capri was uneasy, yet he could not assign

a reason for her being so ; neither could he make up his mind as to whether she was really changed, or whether her present manner was the result of some new mood she was just then indulging in, which would wear away and have utterly changed in the next hour.

He wished he knew. As it was, he felt keenly disappointed. All the pleasure he had known but a short while before, deserted him now and left him dispirited and wretched. Some cloud, whose shape and colour he could not yet discern, came between him and the sunshine of his life. He began to feel miserable, and yet to rebuke himself for his misery, as he did not quite know from what cause it sprang.

He could say no more to Capri that day, all that he had meant to tell her had vanished from his mind. Had she but let him speak of his love, let him tell her how he

loved her, longed for the day when her life should be united to his, when for ever and for aye their feet should tread the same pathway, he would have been satisfied.

Even now in leaving he made a final effort to speak, but his throat felt dry, the words refused to come, and looking at her face he knew she was in no humour to listen to any tender sentiments he might express.

“Good-bye,” he said, quietly holding out his hand and gazing into her face with a calm, grave look.

“Good-bye,” she answered, taking his hand; but for the first time since she had known him her eyes refused to meet his.

The artist pressed her hand tightly, and the colour came mounting into her cheeks. Neither of them spoke; some imperceptible shadow had passed between and parted them.

Marcus Phillips suddenly let go her hand,

and the next instant the door closed softly behind him.

Capri stood quite quiet in the same spot where he had left her; stood as if in a trance, her eyes fixed on the closed door as if she expected he would return again, her lips tightly pressed together. His parting so quietly disappointed her; had she pained him by her light words?

Suddenly on the impulse of the moment she started, ran to the door quickly, rushed down the first flight of stairs, and called out softly,

“ Marc, Marc !”

The closing of the outer door was the only response she received. He had not heard her.

Looking down she saw the boy of many buttons staring up at her surprisedly. The sight of him recalled her to a sense of her dignity in an instant.



"Shall I call him, ma'am?" he asked.

"No," she answered, drawing back.

She went back to the drawing-room, and, throwing herself into one of the gorgeous yellow chairs, she covered her face with her hands; and tears came into her eyes.

"Oh, Marc, Marc, my love, have I been cruel to you?" she said, with a sob in her voice.

The bang which the outer door had given still rang in her ears.

"Have I been cruel, when I meant but to be kind," she said, sobbing again, "dear old Marc, may God bless you always!"

Had he but heard her then! Ah had he indeed!

But he had gone into the street with a new sense of depression and weight in his heart. He felt half stupefied, and wondered if it was still the same sun that was shining, which had made everything appear so fair and bright an hour since.

Now all was changed.

The sky was cloudless as before ; the hot sun had made the pavements white, the passers-by looked half broiled, and wiped their foreheads with their handkerchiefs, or fanned themselves with the same useful article, according to the dictates of their wisdom, and yet all was altered.

The atmosphere seemed to have lost its exhilaration, and become dull and oppressive, the sun was all a great blaze and glare, the streets were noisy and disagreeable.

In one brief hour all the earth had changed for him.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## APPROACHING A CRISIS.

WEDNESDAY morning came round, and Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson was in a state of excitement. Lord Harrick was to call for her in his trap at twelve o'clock, in order to drive her to Richmond.

“La, to think of it all,” said the American, as she forced her stout hand into her light gloves, which were a size too small, and looked in despair at her round arms, that broadly resented the liberties eight buttons were striving to take with them. “To think of being driven in his own trap by a lord, a real ‘vizcount.’ My! if only Mrs. B.

Ulysses Hatchaway, of Illinois city, was by to see her, or Colonel H. Johnson Walworth," who had offered her his hand and heart, both of which she had rejected; the one because it handled fruit all day long, the other because it had no true appreciation of art.

If only they were by to see her step into the "vizcount's" trap. She could write to them, of course, concerning the interesting fact, but she felt sure they would not credit her statements; people seldom believe in the good fortune of their friends, and unfortunately the press in England did not notice such "personalities" in its columns usually, as the American papers did.

If Myra Smiffson bought a fashionable sack, or H. Brickbat Fergusson sported a new diamond ring, or the Rev. Pew Hearhim lighted an additional candle on his altar, or Miss Wellie Greattoe of the "Morning Star" ballet changed the colour of her wig,

you saw it all beautifully in print the morning after, along with several little items of neighbourly gossip and scandal, such as that Mrs. Hercules Europington was shortly expected to elope with Colonel Popgun, or that Mrs. Jackerton had horsewhipped her husband for remaining out all night, or that pretty Miss Freeking had promised to shoot her lover for deserting her in favour of red-haired Mattie Dolson, who kept a mangling establishment down west.

In Europe the press was certainly behind-hand, and seldom dished up pleasant personalities like the worthy editors in the new country.

True, Newton Marrix had some interest in the press, and might be able to get the fact of her drive with Lord Harrick mentioned casually—just casually, as if it were an every day event, in some of the society papers. She would see what could be done

in that way ; and if the desired item was inserted, if it were only in three lines, she would make it a handsome thing for the editor ; for she would buy up a complete edition of the paper, and, first marking the lines recording her drive, would post them to all her friends, showing them that she was moving in high society and was on familiar terms with a lord, with a real “ viz-count,” a title which they might happily believe was next in rank to his royal highness, and so take additional comfort and satisfaction to their democratic souls.

The old country was all very well, but it was to be regretted that it was so singularly behindhand in many ways after all. Now here was a lord coming to drive her away in his trap, that would have his crest probably painted all over it, and no one would notice the event ; perhaps even her neighbours would not stare from the opposite

windows, and so half of the gratification and pleasure would be taken from the trip for this republican lady.

She was waiting in the drawing-room ready dressed, determined not to keep Lord Harrick waiting a minute.

She had on a dress of purple hue trimmed all over with lace ; the skirts seemed voluminous and made Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson look stouter than was even her already ample person. A black satin cape, upon which some millions of black beads glittered with every movement, covered her broad shoulders ; a Parisian bonnet, declared to be an inspiration of the great Worth's, depended from, rather than lay upon her head ; she had a bright little bouquet in her breast ; her light gloves were buttoned to the elbow, and she wore some heavy gold bracelets on her wrists.

If her appearance was not picturesque it

was at least attractive and highly coloured, and her bosom swelled with pride at the glorious *ensemble* of her toilette.

Newton Marrix had not yet come; he was an agreeable young man, who had never disappointed her as yet, and he would be sure to put in an appearance at the proper time.

So Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson sat at one of her drawing-room windows, where turning to the left she could see the first signs of the advancing trap, and turning to the right she could at leisure observe the effect of her resplendent appearance in an opposite mirror.

Capri was watching too, sitting very quietly by her patroness, with a look of pleasure and anxiety in her eyes, which she strove in vain to suppress. She looked wonderfully handsome and artistic to-day in a Rubens hat of ruby velvet, so dark in hue that it



looked almost black in the shade. The brim sheltering her face cast a shadow over it that lent a richer tone to the olive of her complexion, and gave a darker hue to her eyes.

Her dress was of pale brown, slashed with velvet the colour of her hat, and the silver bangle which Lord Harrick had given her was the only ornament which she wore.

“She looks like a picture,” thought Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson, who now contemplated the girl with some satisfaction. She had begun to feel not a little proud of having as her companion the original of the “Beggar Maid” picture which caused such attraction in art-circles this season.

Capri’s name had been spoken of in the society journals a hundred times. If she drove in the Row with Mrs. Lordson, or sat on a chair in the Park, or went to a theatre, or visited a gallery, or was present at a

conversazione, the public was duly informed of it at the end of the week, when the gossiping papers were published.

Those who were in society, and those who were not, had grown to know her name ; it grew as familiar on the lips of the public as that of any popular actress or professional beauty.

The great Van der Weyde had requested her to give him a sitting, with the view of having her face afterwards exhibited in the windows among the dream of fair women and others daily stared at by the mob, and sold for a shilling per head. Capri, prompted by her love of notoriety and admiration, and acting on Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson's advice, had consented. He had photographed the "Beggar Maid" picture which was also for sale. The *Graphic* had given a lithograph of the now famous picture as a supplement, and altogether Capri

became as well known as the most popular of the fashionable beauties whose rival she bid fair to become.

By these means her features had grown so familiar to the public that, when she appeared before it in her own proper person, it recognized her and pointed her out to its country cousin as an object of curiosity and interest second only to Miss Amy St. Somebody of the Ophelia Theatre; and Capri got stared at thoroughly with all that good taste and feeling which the British public invariably betrays, whether in a west-end drawing-room or on an east-end pavement.

Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson felt proud of all this, for to her mind she had a kind of partnership in the honour and glory of Capri's notoriety. It reflected itself on her, she thought; at all events it helped to have Mrs. Lordson's name placed on visiting lists

where it would never otherwise have appeared, and got her tolerated in rooms where her parti-coloured presence was a hideous glare discordant to the chaste pre-Raphaelite colours of her surroundings.

Capri pleased and humoured and made herself useful in a thousand subtle ways to her patroness. Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson wondered how she had been able to get on alone before they met. She was quite satisfied she could never manage without her now, having once realized the benefit of the girl's good taste and quick judgment on matters near and dear to the feminine heart.

Capri was the happy possessor of that sense greater in itself than any of the five, tact; and with tact she managed the wealthy American to her entire satisfaction; wound her to her will without Mrs. Lordson ever once dreaming that she obeyed the girl

implicitly ; for in the concealment of its power and force true tact lies.

She had begun to tone down her patroness in many ways already ; it was only on such an occasion as this gala day that Mrs. Lordson neglected Capri's delicate hints and insisted on appearing in all the glory of many colours, and the girl was too politic not to bend now and then ; her control rose all the higher afterwards.

In many quiet ways Capri hinted to the matron that many of her words and ways were too pronounced for the nervous feelings of the sensitive society in which she now moved ; and Mrs. Lordson was quick to catch and profit by her seasonable words.

Capri sang and played " like a real angel, I'm sure," said Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson, adding the last words in consideration of the fact that she had never yet had an opportunity of hearing the vocal abilities of one

of the celestial choir. Capri helped to receive visitors and entertain them, and went about with Mrs. Lordson wherever the pleasure of that lady's presence was requested, and elsewhere.

Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson was a woman whose amount of common sense saved her from many blunders into which she often would otherwise have fallen. Through its useful medium she now clearly began to perceive that Lord Harrick's visits to her house were paid not altogether for the purpose of enjoying the pure and gentle delights of her conversation, and of hearing her opinions on the world at large, and art in particular, as she at first fondly imagined.

She began quietly to study the young viscount after her own fashion, and to come to some distinct conclusions. He called often to see her, was the most constant visitor she had, a fact by no means disagreeable.

She also observed that whilst Capri was in the room his attention was seldom given to anyone else, that when the girl spoke to him he brightened visibly; that his eyes followed her wherever she went, that he was dull and listless when she was not present, and answered all conversation addressed to him in monosyllables; that a word from Capri made him change colour, and made his round blue eyes sparkle with pleasure, that in all he said or did he strove to please her, and that in fact he was very much in love with her.

“La !” said Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson, “he has lost his heart to her, and he a real vizcount. I know the signs well,” she continued with a sigh, “it was just the same with Lordson when he came in the evenings to pay his addresses to me, though of course, he was not quite so shy as Lord Harrick is, but then it is true he was not a vizcount,

and a great pity too ; I'd make a fine viz-countess myself."

She was too sensible to feel any jealousy, or to imagine the tickets for concerts, the boxes at theatres, the invitations to flower-shows were all given in order to accompany her to those various places, as many women might foolishly have done in her place.

This drive to-day she knew, though verbally offered to her, was really meant for Capri's enjoyment ; but Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson accepted it all the same and made no remarks. It was enough for her that a real lord visited continually at her house, accompanied her to theatres and concerts and in walks in the Park, and was now about to drive her in his trap to Richmond ; these things were in themselves acts of which she felt quite proud.

It was quite possible that Lord Harrick might marry Capri ; there is no knowing, she



said to herself, what a man in love may do ; he was young and impressionable, Capri was a singularly handsome girl, her appearance might almost be described as distinguished, and he was a man whose actions were uncontrolled by meddling relatives, so there was no reason why he should not marry her. It was not only possible but probable that he would, and the good woman determined to give every chance that lay in her power to Capri in order that such a desirable event might take place.

This would indeed be something great to have achieved or helped to achieve—the marriage of her companion to a “vizcount”—her companion, why it would render Mrs. Lordson famous in society ; and then she was quite certain she should earn the gratitude and eternal friendship of the vizcountess by her present exertions to throw the young people together and forward their

union; indeed, she was acting just like a mother to Capri.

And what could not the girl, when she became the Viscountess Harrick, do for her in turn, when she took her proper station in society as the wife of a peer of the realm? Could she not fling wide the golden gates of the most aristocratic society in the world for Mrs. W. Achilles to pass superbly through? Could she not make her one of themselves almost, if not in name at least in friendship?

The good woman closed her eyes, for the scene which rose up before her was dazzling in its brightness. Already she felt herself shaking hands with half a dozen duchesses—real duchesses, mind you, perhaps with coronets on their heads, and velvet trains trimmed with ermine, such as she saw in a picture of the coronation of the Queen: she felt her arm resting within that of a marquis

or an earl as she was led down to dinner in some historic mansion, and heard herself talking high art as she exhibited the wonders of her cabinet and Greek vase to a countess whom, after being spoken to by dukes, and duchesses, and marquises, she treated as a mere common-place individual, very much indeed, though not altogether, like the generality of womenkind.

She sighed to think that such bliss might yet lie in store for her. It was some good fortune that had sent the girl in her path that day when she visited the Grosvenor Gallery; it was some good impulse that had prompted her to ask Capri if she would become her companion. There was no doubt now in her mind that Capri would make this brilliant marriage which would take London society by storm, and then Mrs. Lordson's triumph would come afterwards.

She arranged it all to the uttermost satisfaction of her hopeful mind, and smiled complacently to herself over such pleasant prospects as the future held in store for her, and then slowly opened her eyes and looked at Capri speculatively, and noted the effect of her very charming costume, and told herself that this girl's face was one that would certainly grace the peerage.

## CHAPTER IX.

## ONE SUMMER DAY.

MRS. W. ACHILLES LORDSON might have continued her thoughts much longer, but just then the sound of horses' feet and the rolling of wheels outside called to her mind the great event of the day.

Capri could scarcely restrain herself from running to the window and looking out, but she did, making a strong effort to keep down her curiosity and impatience. A knock that might have awakened the seven sleepers, had they chanced to lie dreaming under Mrs. Lordson's roof, sounded through the house, followed by a ring which pealed louder than a village bell-crier's.

"La, how much there is even in a knock and ring," thought Mrs. Lordson. "Now whoever could do it in that style but one of the nobility themselves? It's quite aristocratic. Ah! if only Mrs. J. Washington Mangletor were in the street to hear the noble music of that sound!"

As it happened, it was only one of Lord Harrick's footmen, who in this manner announced his master, but Mrs. Lordson was ignorant of the fact, happily, and started to her feet immediately.

"Mr. Marrix has not come yet, my dear. I hope he may not be late," she said to Capri, as she shook out her ample skirts.

It would be impossible, of course, for a "vizcount" to wait for him, it was a thing not to be expected for a moment, so she hoped the rising author would appear in time. Just as she spoke a little tap sounded at the drawing-room door, and Newton Marrix

entered breathlessly. Mrs. Lordson brightened visibly at his appearance.

"I was afraid I should be late," he said, when he had shaken hands with the ladies, and had partially recovered breath.

"So was I," said Mrs. Lordson candidly.

"I have been very busy all the morning correcting proofs."

"You literary men are always busy."

"We are the slaves of the public."

"Your chains are invisible to human sight," said Capri.

"But they gall all the more."

"They must not to-day," she answered.

"No, I have thrown them aside for the present," he said, smiling at her.

"That is pleasant to know," said Mrs. Lordson.

"Lord Harrick's trap is at the door. You are ready?"

"Quite. We must not keep him waiting."

Mrs. Lordson once more shook out her plumage until her purple silks rustled in self-exultation, and the millions of beads covering her ample shoulders shot bright glances, and flung tiny gleams of sunrays at one another in the general excitement of the moment.

She went down the little stairs with the air of one heading a royal procession, followed by Capri, and Newton Marrix, and her maid, the latter armed with shawls and wraps.

Lord Harrick was just dismounting from the box seat; one of the footmen held the horses' heads, the other stood by the door of the trap. As the viscount turned, a sight of Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson, in a blaze of purple and glittering beads, suddenly burst on him. The effect would have probably stunned him, but that over her shoulder he caught a glance of Capri's face, look-



ing wonderfully charming and delighted.

To her indeed it was almost as good as a sight of Paradise, when the page flung wide open the door. There was the bright sunshine outside, dazzling in the blue unclouded sky, making everything look fair and happy, and there was the light trap, with two well-bred horses tossing their heads and jingling their harness, ornamented with silver-mounted crests that delighted Mrs. Lordson's republican soul; and there were the footmen in chocolate-colour liveries; and, last of all, Lord Harrick.

In the sunlight his hair seemed to her redder than ever, his face more ruddy and expressionless, his eyes more round and full of wonder at nothing in particular, his clothes tighter, his collar more stiff and straight and desperately determined to cut his neck with its unbending corners, and his aspect altogether more groom-like than usual.

He was in high spirits, and gave little short spasmodic laughs, which spared him the trouble of answering Mrs. Lordson's florid remarks and demonstrations of delight. He grasped Capri's hand very tightly when she said "good morning," and stared at her face under the shadow of the Rubens' hat.

"Delightful day," said Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson, looking up at the sky.

Lord Harrick laughed, and said it was glorious.

"The fates favour us," said Newton Marrix.

"And the weather too," answered Capri.

Then they all laughed in chorus.

The viscount assisted Mrs. Lordson into the trap, and Capri was about to follow when he said,

"Would you not like to sit up in the box, you will have a much better view of the country, and all that sort of thing," he spoke

now without stammering, and gave himself credit for his diplomacy.

Like it? Capri was delighted at the proposal, but she made no answer, contenting herself with looking at Mrs. Lordson anxiously for her approval.

The good-natured, large-hearted American smiled whilst the girl hesitated.

"Go, my dear," she said, "you will, as Lord Harrick says, have a far better view of the country up there, if you don't think it too high," she added archly, knowing very well that Capri was overjoyed at the idea. "For my part," she continued, "it would give me a lightness in the head, I'm sure it would, and I might fall off at any moment. La! to think of it makes me nervous."

Capri gave her a grateful smile and allowed herself to be handed, or nearly lifted, into the box seat. Lord Harrick now carefully settled a light rug round her legs and

feet, lingering longer over the action than was at all necessary, and then took his place beside her.

Newton Marrix sat opposite Mrs. Lordson, and, Lord Harrick having taken the ribbons in his hands, the two footmen got into the body of the trap, sitting opposite each other with folded arms and immoveable muscles, like a pair of porcelain ornaments, and with about as much facial expression.

At first Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson thought it was an injury to her dignity that one of them should sit on the same seat with her, though at the extreme end, almost within reach of her regal-hued silks, whilst the other sat on the same side with Newton Marrix; but then after awhile, looking at them sitting there, exhibiting as little symptoms of life, and apparently heeding her conversation as much as if they were stuffed ornaments, or Egyptian mummies, she

began to think they added much to the appearance of her dignity, and for that purpose were probably sent into life by Providence, exactly a match for each other, in height, appearance, complexion, and general bearing, with a consideration for her feelings, for which she should feel deeply grateful.

Lord Harrick cracked his whip, the perfectly trained horses started, and away they rolled.

The day was brilliant and glorious, and the faint breeze that came to them in their rapid motion delightfully cooling. Soon they left streets and squares behind them and got into the straggling suburbs, half country, half town, looking horridly raw, with rows of brand-new lath and plaster houses destined to send numbers of innocent tenants to their early graves. By degrees the suburbs were passed, and they were

rolling along the broad country road, with sweet-scented green fields on either side, and now and then clumps of wide-branching trees, under which cattle grouped picturesquely in the cool shade.

A sense of delicious ease and exhilaration came over Capri, such as she had not known for years. How strange it was that she should sit there beside Lord Harrick in his trap, watching his satin-skinned horses trotting along, and tossing their heads now and then to make a pleasant jangle with their trappings; that she should sit there calmly enjoying this fair day among scenes which were new to her, although for half a life time they lay within a few miles of her.

Instead of being now in that close, dingy room in the Euston Road, patiently teaching one of the wooden-figured children music for a shilling a lesson, or busying herself about getting an economical dinner

for her father, and wondering whether he would come home with the signs of having met a boon companion, there she now sat beside Lord Harrick, driving in such state as she had never known before.

She thoroughly enjoyed the present, and her head was filled with feverish dreams and hopes of the future, in none of which Marcus Phillips had any place.

Lord Harrick was very kind. He spoke more than usual; his words came freer; he seemed more self-confident and happier. He pointed out to her with his whip places of interest they passed which Capri had often heard of, but never seen. She could scarcely answer him, she was so bewilderingly happy. It all seemed like a delightful dream to her: the freshness and brightness of the day, the picturesque scenes through which they passed, the rapid passage through the air. It was all

fresh and new to her, and all glorious.

She had opened her large crimson sunshade to protect herself from the mid-day glare, and the light coming through it cast a shade upon her pale face that was wonderfully becoming.

Lord Harrick took every opportunity he could of looking at her ; an attention that pleased her much. Once or twice her great, dark eyes, full of luminous happiness, met his with a full, sunny look, the like of which he had never been rewarded with before. It made the blood come into his face as if he were a school-boy. Once he placed his disengaged hand on hers, and pressed it. There was a magnetism in the touch that thrilled him, but Capri seemed unconscious of it, and gave no returning motion.

He had never been so happy in his life before. To sit beside this girl, to feel the light touch of her form now and then press



against him, to take her hand and hold it in his own, to look into her lovely face and watch the expression of pleasure lying like light in her dark eyes, to hear her voice sweeter than all music fall on his ears was a delight which filled him with such rapture as he had never known till then.

Ah! if she were only his wife, if she were solely his for ever and ever! At the thought his breath came heavily, his broad chest swelled, rose, and fell, and all the blood ran hot in his veins.

At last they drove into Richmond Park, and the girl could no longer contain her delight.

"How beautiful it all is!" she said, in a subdued voice, looking at the dark old oaks and the great wide sweep of park lands where the deer stood in picturesque groups beyond.

The sunlight fell in broad, unbroken

yellow beams upon the green sward, and sparkled like fire upon the distant Thames, of which glorious glimpses came to them between intervening boughs and the fresh leaves of clustering trees.

"It is all delightful."

"I am glad you enjoy it so much."

"It seems strange to me that such beauty should have lain so near town all these years, and I never to have seen it before; and I suppose there are hundreds, thousands of the population that have never had a glimpse of it yet."

"I am fortunate," said Lord Harrick, taking the opportunity of placing his face near to hers as he lowered his head in passing beneath an outstretched bough, "I am fortunate in being the first to show you the place."

"You are very good," she replied, honestly grateful to him for the pleasure

he gave her—"very good, and I know I shall never forget this day."

She sighed as she spoke, as if regret was mingled with her joy.

He smiled, both pleased and gratified, as he listened to her.

"She is delightfully fresh," he said to himself. "What a pleasure it would be for a man to pass his life with this girl! What eyes she has! they seem to go right through a fellow and touch his heart."

To indulge more fully in such a sentiment, he slackened rein and drew the horses up under a clump of trees, where Thompson is said to have written the greater portion of his "Seasons."

They all got down, and the footmen produced a light luncheon and some bottles of champagne.

"La!" commenced Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson, when she had seated herself on

some rugs taken from the trap and spread upon the grass—"it's all charming, I'm sure. I never spent such a delightful day. And to think that a poet wrote under these trees, as Mr. Marrix tells me; why, it's quite romantic and altogether enjoyable! Is it not, my dear?" she said, turning to Capri.

"Yes," answered the girl briefly, for she thought just then that Mrs. Lordson's highly-coloured presence was like a great blur upon the quiet landscape, and the matron's voice somehow startled and disturbed her peaceful dreaminess.

"Yes," said Newton Marrix, who was always ready to fill up the blanks in the conversation, "the author of 'The Seasons' may well have written here the lines commencing—

'But who can paint  
Like Nature? Can imagination boast  
Amid its gay creation hues like hers,

Or can it mix them with that matchless skill  
And lose them in each other as appears  
In every bud that blows ?' "

The author waved his hand as he ended.

Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson looked at Newton Marrix with delight and pleasure, and was much impressed with his apt quotation.

"I once saw our great poet Mr. Longfellow," she said, taking a lead, as she considered, in a literary conversation. "He wore very long hair and a 'Down South' hat, and a coat which I'm sure he may have had for twenty years; and Colonel H. Johnson Walworth told me that the poet suffers greatly from corns in the fall, poor man."

Lord Harrick laughed, and Mrs. Lordson felt proud of being able to amuse him with such interesting details of personal gossip.

"Oh yes," she continued, "and I saw Horace Greely also; he is dead, you know, but J. Henry Pinkerton, the reporter who interviewed him for the *Illinois Gazette*, told me all about him."

"Was he eccentric?" said Newton Marrix.

"Well, Mr. Greely told Pinkerton he wrote most of his articles with his night-cap on; that he wrote with a quill taken from a pet goose, and that he went to bed with stockings on; but, la, these notable people like poets and artists and authors are that queer, you see."

"It's the eccentricity of genius," replied Newton Marrix, mildly. "Mr. Ruskin tells us in one of his letters that he went down to the Pizzia in Venice in a flowered dressing-gown one morning, quite unconscious of the fact all the while."

"My! he did," said Mrs. Lordson.

"And I," continued Newton Marrix,

“knew a mathematician who, having gone to live in a house in the country, was found sitting beside the fireplace in his study reading, just where the rain came down, with an open umbrella over him, the rest of the room being perfectly dry; and when a friend suggested to him that he might move his position, he said the thought had never occurred to him.”

“Poor old chap,” said Lord Harrick.

“I heard Mr. Whitman speak once in our institute,” said Mrs. Lordson, determined on carrying on a conversation on the ways and habits of literary men.

“How did you like him?”

“Well enough as far as that goes. They call him a poet; but, bless you, he wore a blue flannel shirt, without coat or waistcoat—to be sure the night was hot—and he held an umbrella in his hand, which he pounded the stage with. They told me he wrote

beautifully about grass ; but he did not look half such a poet as Mr. Lucius Martyn, whom I drank tea with at Mrs. Stonex Stanning's, and who spoke real poetry all the time."

"You must not judge by appearances," said the author.

"No, that is true. But then poets ought to look poets."

"Perhaps Nature does not permit them."

"Then they should not write."

Capri felt rather uneasy and somewhat ashamed at Mrs. Lordson's reminiscences of great men, and turned the conversation.

"I feel so happy," she remarked, looking at Lord Harrick as she munched a biscuit.

"I think I could live here for ever."

"I believe a few weeks would tire you of it," replied Newton Marrix ; "Richmond is a dreary waste in winter."

"Would you like to live in the country?"



asked the viscount, thinking just then of his big Elizabethan red brick house shut in among its vast park lands in Yorkshire; and of Harrick Court situated in the wild loveliness of his native highlands. What would she say to these places if she saw them?

Capri declared that she had grown tired of town life, and longed to spend a few quiet months in the country.

When the luncheon was eaten and the champagne disposed of, Lord Harrick said,

"I think we might drive on to Kingston or Hampton Court and come back again. Dinner is ordered for seven o'clock at the 'Star and Garter.'"

"A most delightful arrangement," answered Mrs. Lordson, beaming with smiles.

"It's a capital idea," said Newton Marrix; "the drive home in the early night will be splendid, and we shall have a moon up about ten o'clock."

"Will the place look more beautiful by moonlight?" asked Capri.

"Far," said Lord Harrick.

Capri's eyes met his for a second, and a colour came to her face.

"Why, if it looks better then," said Mrs. Lordson, "it will be a real fairy-land."

"Do you like a drive home in the moonlight, Miss Capri?" asked the viscount.

"I have never had one."

"It is a pleasure then in store for you, and I hope you will not forget your first experience."

She felt that he was looking at her, but she did not dare to raise her eyes. She knew that his words had an under-meaning which she was quick to interpret.

What would happen during the drive home in the moonlight?

At his words her heart beat fast, a thrill of delight passed through her, a great hope

sprang up in her soul. Was her ambition about to be realized? Would he ask her to become his wife? The thought that the question—on the answer of which her fate for ever might depend—would probably be asked her in a few hours made her confused.

“Will you allow me to smoke a cigar?”

Lord Harrick’s voice recalled her to herself once more.

“Certainly.”

He struck a light and commenced smoking; the horses were brought from under the clump of wide-spreading trees, Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson was assisted into the trap, Capri was lifted into the box, the viscount took the ribbons in his hand, and once more they were journeying on through the park again.

It was delightful; they startled herds of deer now and then, passed under great,

wide-stretching branches, beneath which Capri and Lord Harrick had to stoop their heads; swept past acres of soft green sward, and by beds of ferns in all the beauty of varied hues and strength of wild luxuriance, where rabbits played, and rollicked, and leaped; and then they drove out once more into the broad country road.

Capri was filled with pleasure at the prospect of seeing Hampton Court; and it was one of the sights which Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson had longed to see since she came to England. Newton Marrix had been telling her of its royal associations, and her mind was fired with the memories of its past greatness.

For Capri the day was simply glorious. She had not spoken to Lord Harrick since they continued their drive. He smoked two or three cigars, and contented himself with looking into her face now and then,

and was apparently satisfied with the pleasure which he plainly saw reflected there. She let her eyes wander over the scenes they passed, quietly taking in their beauties and letting them reflect themselves on her heart with no words of comment.

She was in a dreamy state of enjoyment, and was far too happy to interrupt the spell that bound her, by talking ; when at last they left the Park and came into the road once more, she said,

“I think I have never been so happy for so many consecutive hours before.”

“Are you never happy, then ?” he asked, making some pretence of settling the rug around her.

“Yes, for an hour or so at a time ; but my days are chequered, shade follows sunlight, as surely as day follows night. I think it will be so all my life.”

“Why ?”

"Because I fear my life is not destined to be a happy one."

"You speak from a short experience."

"I speak rather from an intuition."

"Or what you mistake for such."

"Perhaps."

Lord Harrick said no more. He wanted to tell her he should strive to make her life happy if she would permit him, and yet the words failed to come, possibly because at times he still wavered in his opinion as to whether it would be well for him to make this Bohemian the future Viscountess Harrick or not.

The only answer he made to her last words was to glance into her dark eyes. They had now an expression he had never seen before, one of placid, uninterrupted happiness, repose, and dreaminess; a look that softened her face inexpressibly, and made it more gentle and lovely than he had seen it yet.

The girl's silent mood continued when they were in Hampton, and walked through the quaint old gardens.

It was all like a dream ; it was far too delightful to have any connection with the waking life that she had known. It was too placid and happy to be by any possibility a portion of her every day existence that was rendered feverish by hopes, and restless by little plots, and weary by boredom, and heavy by acting.

To-day she was free from all these things save when the thoughts of her ambition haunted her. The air was fragrant and fresh, the sunshine brilliant, the scenes that met her eyes charming.

It was worth while having lived for such a day as this.

Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson was demonstrative in her expressions of pleasure, and insisted on seeing Henry VIII.'s favourite

walk, the tree which Mary had sat under, the window where Elizabeth watched and waited for Lord Essex, the knoll where the first Charles had played with his children, the maze and the gardens.

They were all shrines at which the good woman paid humble homage: she was bewildered at seeing so many spots sanctified by royalty, and gave vent to her delight in many exclamations, as Newton Marrix, ever her attendant spirit, pointed them out and gave some interesting details concerning each.

When they had seen every spot of interest that the author could remember, and had talked over their associations and marvelled over their beauties they drove back to Richmond, and drew up at the "Star and Garter."

The prospect of dinner was agreeable to three of the party. They felt that after



the excitement of the day their physical powers required sustaining. Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson declared herself quite hungry, and Newton Marrix certainly felt that he was.

They had just a quarter of an hour to cool and rest before dinner was announced, during which time the matron had begun to grow impatient at the slowness of the old country.

Capri had no appetite. She just tasted the soup, declined the fish, played with the entrées when they were served, but had some fruit and an ice-cream by-and-by. The unusual excitement of the day had been almost too much for her. She lay back in her chair languidly, leaving the conversation entirely to Newton Marrix and Mrs. Lordson. The young author's spirits seemed to rise when he had had several glasses of hock and some dry cham-

pagne. He kept pouring out a flow of words, clever, vivacious, with a sparkle of wit about them now and then, at which he laughed a good deal, his hearers joining him from sympathy. Lord Harrick was grateful to him for keeping up a conversation which, without his aid, would certainly flag and fall dead; and he mentally declared that Marrix was a capital fellow, whom he should often ask to dinner.

The blinds of the windows in the room where they dined were not drawn, even when the lights were brought in with dessert; and Capri looked across the table with its wines, and glasses, and fragrant flowers, out beyond, where the sunlight had faded in the sky, leaving a dull golden glow westward, which was dimly reflected in the river below. Before they rose up from the table, Capri went to the window. The yellow glow had quite faded, a pale

young moon rose up from behind a battlement of fleecy clouds, and soared slowly into the hazy azure of the sky. Capri thought she had never seen anything so beautiful as this since she had left her native island. Almost under the window the smooth river flowed peacefully on, reflecting the tender, silver light above. There was something mystic in its beauty, yet something infinitely restful and soothing. The branches of some trees opposite stood out against the sky, every leaf perfectly defined against its blue background. A boat passed noiselessly down the tide, looking like a shadow upon the luminous water; the shore beyond was wrapped in a purple haze; a few stars came out in the heavens. It was all like a picture.

If only Marcus Phillips was here to see it. Dear old Marc. It was the first time she had thought of him that day, and a

feeling of reproach at her forgetfulness came upon her. She had been so happy, and yet she had not once remembered him till this scene had in some way recalled him to her mind. She thought of her last parting with him, of the disappointment which she saw on his face, of the troubled, almost reproachful look which his eyes expressed. She heaved a little sigh, and then started when she heard Mrs. Lordson's strong voice calling to her, and immediately afterwards the matron came over to where Capri had remained, wrapped in a shawl of many colours, and quite ready for her drive home.

Lord Harrick and Newton Marrix were walking up and down outside smoking while the horses were being put to the trap.

"Well, I declare, here you are dreaming, my dear," said Mrs. Lordson.

"It is such a glorious night," replied Capri in excuse.

"Ay, all young people think the nights are glorious when the moon is up. They are yet strangers to neuralgia."

Capri could not help laughing.

"Go, my dear, and put on your wraps," said Mrs. Lordson, kindly.

Presently the trap came round, and again they were all seated in their old places, driving towards town once more.

The moon had risen higher in the sky; the road looked a white, broad strip in the pale light; here and there the branches of trees cast dark shadows that lay like a blur upon the highway. All nature was calm; no sound but the tramp of the horses' feet and the roll of the wheels broke the silence. A light breeze, refreshing after the great heat, crossed the land, carrying with it

delicious odours of hay and hawthorn and honeysuckle, and a thousand sweet-smelling shrubs and wild-flowers that during the long day had lain hidden from the sun, deep in the cool hedgerows, and only now ventured to put forth their heads and waft their sweetness on the air because the dewy night had come.

Newton Marrix kept up a monologue, quoting Shelley's lines to the "Orbed Maiden," and some of Byron's rhapsodies to night, which Mrs. Lordson listened to with a pleased attention.

Capri said little. Lord Harrick had asked her permission to smoke a cigar in driving home, and did not speak either, after the weed had entered his lips, so there was a complete silence between them for some miles of their journey. The girl was sorry her visit was ended; this one summer day that had been the happiest she could re-

member since she left the island where she had first drawn breath ; it had been bright and pleasant, and she should always remember it, no matter what the future brought her.

The excitement was past, but the reaction left her pleased and content, and she went over in her mind all the little incidental pleasures she had enjoyed since morning. To end all, this drive home in the moonlight was quieting and enjoyable, and altogether she felt very happy.

By and by Lord Harrick finished his cigar, and drew himself a little nearer to Capri, so that he was quite close to her now. Every movement he gave he touched her, and every time he touched her gave him a fresh pleasure. He too had been thinking, and his thoughts had shaped themselves into a resolution. He now felt more satisfied and happy.

"Are you tired?" he asked Capri, in a tone which the others, sitting behind, could not hear.

"No," she answered, "I am too happy to speak. Have you ever felt that words distract your happiness?"

"Sometimes."

"The whole day has been very enjoyable," she continued, looking at him gratefully. He had given her a very great pleasure.

In the moonlight he could see that her dark eyes sparkled and were full of liquid brightness. They were silent again, and could hear Newton Marrix quoting Walt Whitman's "Scene in Camp" for the benefit of the poet's countrywoman. The horses dashed along the road at a brisk pace.

"Miss Capri—Capri," said Lord Harrick, putting his face very close to hers.

"Well?"



"I wish you would let me often give you a day like this."

"You are very good; indeed you are very kind," she answered.

He laid one hand on hers, as he had done in the morning, and pressed it tighter and tighter. He longed to throw his arm around her and clasp her to himself.

She was calm. She noted the picturesque grouping of a herd of cows lying in the deep fragrant clover under the shade of some trees, and watched a little road-side stream sparkle as the moonlight fell upon its surface.

Had the moment come when he was about to ask her to become his wife?—and, if it had, could she now await it with such calmness? She wondered at herself vaguely. Was this the calmness of triumph? In a moment Lord Harrick spoke again.

"I wish," he said, "you would let me

give you trips like this, when you enjoy it so much, and—and I wish you could care for me.”

“Believe me I am grateful.”

“But that is not what I want. I wish you could like me, care for me better than for other men.”

He said the last words rapidly, and with an earnestness that surprised and startled her. His lips were quite close to her snow, she felt the arm that touched her quiver, felt that the hot blood had flushed his face. She made him no answer.

“I wish you could care for me.”

“I do.”

“Do you?” he said, catching at her words.

She pressed his hand.

“Care for me better than for any other man, and love me, for I——”

At that instant the near horse shied at a

large white stone that lay by the hedge-side, the trap swerved suddenly across the road, and Capri, who was almost jostled from her seat, uttered a cry, and clung to the rail of the box-seat.

The viscount pulled the horses straight in a minute.

“Damn you !” he said, in a passion, as he raised his whip in the air, and lashed the animals again and again until they dashed forward blindly at a furious pace. They had now entered the suburbs. The rows of the lath and plaster houses lay as if sleeping in the moonlight, with drawn blinds and a general air of peacefulness and repose ; only the sound of the galloping horses and trap disturbed the nocturnal stillness.

Lord Harrick still kept the horses well in hand, for they were yet restless. His love-making humour had been startled, and returned to him no more that night ; he did

not speak till they drove up to Mrs. Lordson's door. Then he lifted Capri down from the box with more care than she could have believed it possible for him to use.

"Good night," he said, pressing her hand.

"Good night," she answered, leaving her fingers resting in his palm, but not raising her eyes.

"It is only a postponement," she said to herself, as she entered the hall. She sighed once. Was she sad or glad?

## CHAPTER X.

## ONLY A RAG.

THE second Thursday in July came round, the day fixed for one of Mrs. Stonex Stanning's grand receptions, and that lady made high preparations to receive her guests.

Bohemia hurried to wash its hands, brush its long hair, and put on its dress-clothes, in some cases just released from number one round the corner; for Bohemia was going to meet society, and wear its most respectable airs and graces for the occasion.

Every poet and painter and author in London worth knowing, and very many who were not, were bidden to Mrs. Stonex

Stanning's rooms for this especial night. Bohemia to a man adored Mrs. Stonex Stanning, and felt proud of her in its own way; for she had been its daughter long ago, and had known all about its careless, happy-go-lucky ways, its manners and habits, its pot-boilers and its struggles, and, though she had left it to make a wealthy marriage, she loved it still in her heart; and, when freedom again allowed her, had thrown wide her gates, and opened her arms to receive her own people once more.

Yes, Bohemia felt proud of Mrs. Stonex Stanning, and fond of her likewise. Did she not give it an opportunity of meeting the best people in town, introduce it to very useful personages, who bought its pictures, read its books, sang its songs, and sat to it for portraits; and did she not often take its struggling children by the hand, and, with smiles of encouragement upon

her grave sweet face, cheer them and help them into the world's notice ?

For days before the date of her reception came round, it was spoken of throughout the length and breadth of Bohemia. Fonds Ronconson, the young actor, meeting Miss Burneblack, the novelist, in the Strand, asked her if she were going there. The lady was of course bidden—did Mr. Fonds Ronconson think any artistic gathering could be complete without her ? He did not : if such a thing were possible, he knew how she would be missed ; the young man sighed at the very thought.

Jack Pallet, the rising portrait-painter, made an engagement with Mr. De Charivari, one of *Punch's* artists, to take him up on his way to Kensington ; Hal Vector was to call at the Ophelia Theatre, and drive Miss Amy St. Somebody there, after she had killed her husband and gone mad in the

last act of the new sensational play written for her by Mr. Quills; the great actor of the Arena Theatre, it was whispered, would be at the reception also; together with Sir Justin Mayton of the Royal Academy, and many other notables of the art-world.

At ten o'clock the guests commenced to arrive. An awning of coloured silk stretched from the entrance to the road; the doors stood open, revealing a sight of the wide hall, with its great bronze figures supporting clusters of waxen lights, and the broad oak steps covered with dark crimson velvet pile, and lined at either side with palms of wondrous growth, and myrtle and many tropical plants.

The drawing-room looked charming, lit with rose-hued tapers held in curiously-wrought sconces that had once adorned an Eastern temple, and which were covered with damascene work, said to be the in-



spiration of that great artist in bronze, Mohammed, son of Eiz Zein. The pure radiance fell upon the numberless pictures on the walls, and touched the soft filmy Oriental curtains, with their background of dead gold, upon which arabesques of dull red flowers, and rare-plumaged birds, and strange grotesque symbols of the Eastern faith were curiously intermingled.

In the corners of the room stood tall Corean jars, decorated with the sacred *fong hoang*, and edged with leaves and branches of peach-trees in full flower; where pale greens and rich blues, faint yellows and deep gold and black, made wondrous harmonies of colour. A yellow rose-tree filled the fireplace, its branches, thick with buds, clinging to the white marble pillars on either side; its fragrance sweetening all the air.

The room, with its subdued colours, its

soft lights, its wondrous pictures, and artistic effects, was a dream of beauty long to be remembered.

Mrs. Stonex Stanning stood near the drawing-room door, waiting to receive her friends. A dress of pale amber, slashed with white satin, fell in folds around her lithe figure ; a yellow rose lay half hidden among the lace at her breast, another was fixed among the coils of her rich, brown hair. She looked fair and handsome to-night, a happy smile on her lips, a calm light in her gentle grey eyes, a blush upon her cheeks that brought into relief the clearness of her complexion.

"How well our hostess is looking to-night," said Lady Everfair to her friend, Mrs. Frumage.

Lady Everfair was quite satisfied that she herself looked charming likewise, for her maid had that evening spent two

agonising hours in repairing the ravages which time had been rude enough to make upon her ladyship.

“Wonderfully well,” said Mrs. Frumage, in reply ; “it is quite astonishing how some people can preserve their youthful appearances. I never could, I know. I was old while I was yet young.”

“That was a bad habit you gave yourself, my dear.”

“True : I feel the results of it now ; when I am old I look no longer young. Now there is Lady Gabriel Folks——”

“Who looks young while she is old, which is astonishing, considering all she has gone through. Why, I am sure the ordeal of a divorce court would be more than I could survive.”

“Ah ! she is an excellent wife now, my dear.”

“When she had grown old and ugly.

She has also become severely religious ; you should hear her speak of poor Lord Rockstrands, who only attempted bigamy," said Lady Everfair, who delighted in saying the hardest things in the world of her friends ; for friendship is nothing if such charming freedoms may not be taken with it at every opportunity.

" I know she is fond of giving advice."

" Tedious as a sermon, no doubt."

" Hush ! she is coming this way."

" Ah ! dear Lady Gabriel, we were just talking of you, I am so glad to see you here ; and how well you are looking ! Not fatigued, I hope, after all the exertions about your concert in aid of the Heathen Chineses' grandchildren, poor dear little things ?"

" Not at all : it was a great success. It has enabled me to send two hundred pounds towards the funds. When the missionaries

last wrote to me they mentioned that sixteen of the children had forsworn gambling for ever."

"How consoling!"

"Yes, such comforting news enables one to work in so worthy a cause."

"It is so good of you."

"What a strange lot of people are here to-night! I was told Sarah Bernhardt was coming, and some people from the Arena Theatre."

"So we have heard. Mrs. Stonex Stan-ning is the patroness of artists, you know."

"It is hard to have to meet such people," sighed Lady Gabriel, "but I suppose one must talk to them. One does not need an introduction, of course. I want to ask one of them to give a recitation, or play something at my house for the benefit of the Purified Cab Drivers' Society, in which I am much interested."

"Your exertion is quite wonderful," said Mrs. Frumage.

"Wonderful!" repeated Lady Everfair.

"I am told that class of people," said Lady Gabriel serenely, "are extremely good-natured. It is their redeeming quality, if anything could redeem their lives, poor things!"

"Yes, certainly good-natured," answered Mrs. Frumage. "I had almost said charitable; and charity begins at home with them in more ways than one, I am told."

Dear Lady Gabriel smiled and passed on. She had caught sight of Hal Vector, and wanted to engage him to sing at one of her charity concerts.

"Wonderful woman," said Lady Everfair, when her friend was at a safe distance. "How she ever managed to get into society again after that affair is more than I can understand."

"Better not understand such things."

"I wonder she did not ask us to subscribe to the Bishop of Sinnerssouls Coal Fund. His grace is her fastest friend, and declares her the best, most injured woman in life."

"There is Lady Ariadne and Mr. Messieurs. They have just come in. What a charming picture that was of her in the Grosvenor last year!"

"Flattering. How attentive Mr. Messieurs is! He is certainly the outcome of this strange era."

"And a very curious outcome too, my dear. Poets are allowed such licence!"

"It always has been allowed them."

"In manner and conduct, I mean."

"Verily this is an age of liberty."

"Alas for the age!"

"Try to catch Lord Chantilly's eye when he looks this way again. I want to speak

to him. There he is, talking to his very dear friend, Mr. Laving, who is asking him, I am sure, how Lady Chantilly is. He is the most amiable of husbands, and the best-natured of men."

"His wife considers him admirable."

"Ah, what a brain she has, my dear! Her head is as full of plots as a certain place is of lost souls."

"Yet an admirable woman."

Just then a murmur ran through the room, and many heads were turned towards the door. Some one of note was evidently coming.

"Who can it be?" said Lady Everfair, putting up her gold-rimmed glasses preparatory to a good stare.

"Perhaps Sarah Bernhardt."

"Too early for her. She is playing in 'Adrienne Lecouvreur' by this time."

"Then possibly it's Father Ignatius, for I



heard he is in town, and Mrs. Stonex Stan-ning is sure to have asked him."

"Oh! if the father comes in his sandals and robe, will it not be delightful? I must really get some one to introduce me."

"Perhaps he will sing. They say he has a delightful voice."

It was, however, neither the actress nor the monk; it was only Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson, in a dress of white-figured velvet, with a stomacher of rubies ablaze with light. She was followed by Capri in a Greek dress, and last of all came Newton Marrix.

"Bless me, who can it be?" asked Mrs. Frumage.

"What fearful shoulders she has!"

"And what rubies!"

"They are magnificent!"

They both stared as Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson walked slowly across the room, bowing to some acquaintances whom she

had met at Mrs. Stonex Stanning's before.

"There is Mr. Marrix following in her train," said Lady Everfair.

"Let us beckon him over, and inquire who she is," said Mrs. Frumage.

"Ah! Mr. Marrix, how do you do? The room is getting so hot, is it not? By the way, who is that tall, stout lady with the shoulders?"

"With the shoulders!" repeated the rising author, in a tone meant to imply surprise, and looking in the opposite direction to that in which he knew Mrs. Lordson was then.

"Not that way," said Mrs. Frumage. "Look towards the other end of the room. The lady we mean came in just before you."

"That lady is Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson. She is a friend of mine."

"Ah! a friend of yours?"

"Yes; an American."

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Frumage. "How charmingly she is dressed! And the girl in the Greek costume is her daughter, I suppose? Lovely face!"

"No; that is Miss Dankers."

"The original of the 'Beggar Maid' picture?"

"Yes."

"Dear me, how interesting! I have been longing to see her. She is very handsome, I am told."

"She is much admired," he answered.

"How many persons you know!" said Lady Everfair. "We are quite at a loss to find out who many of Mrs. Stonex Stanning's celebrities are. She ought really to make them wear tickets, or have them numbered, and have catalogues printed for each night."

"It would be so convenient," put in Mrs. Frumage.

"So it would," answered Newton Marrix,

"if it were necessary, but many of the artists here to-night are known all over Europe."

"Who is that tall man there, looking at the Corean jar?" asked Lady Everfair, pretending not to hear Newton Marrix's last remark.

"That is Mr. Crange. He is almost as deaf as a post."

"Poor man!"

"And he is the musical critic for *Fair Vanity*."

"Indeed! And that little lady with the curls and piercing eyes?"

"That is Miss Rampage, the authoress. She is a famous wit, a thing she resents in everyone else, as if she alone held a special patent for its use."

"Then I hope she will make a good use of it."

"She has done so already."

“How?”

“She is engaged to marry that young man beside her; a very good fellow, thoroughly natural, and very ignorant; with no brains to speak of, and two thousand a year.”

Lady Everfair put up her fan and laughed behind its shelter, for laughter never became her expression; and, moreover, her maid had warned her against indulging in such a violent delight, which might destroy the careful work of hours.

“He is a most amusing young man,” said Mrs. Frumage, when Newton Marrix moved away to join Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson.

When he reached that quarter of the room where the American was, he found she was talking to a foreign-looking young man, with dark blue eyes and a complexion scorched by tropical suns. Lord Harrix was talking to Capri.

Mrs. Lordson, on seeing Newton Marrick approach, introduced him at once to her new acquaintance.

"Mr. Newton Marrix, Mr. Guy Rutherford," she said, waving her great white fan set with rubies. "Mr. Rutherford has lived much abroad," she continued, "and we were discussing points of mutual interest."

Guy Rutherford looked straight in Newton Marrix's face, smiled and bowed.

"Mr. Marrix," went on Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson, "is an author whose name you have heard, I am sure."

"I am not quite so certain of that," said Newton Marrix.

"Being so much abroad, I fear I have not," replied Guy Rutherford, in an apologetic tone.

"Do you stay in England?"

"No, I go to Belgium on Saturday, and heaven—if it interests itself in such matters

—knows where I may roam after that. I thought to have stayed a while in England, but I find your conventional atmosphere is too strong for me ; I find I must have freedom and air once more.”

He smiled pleasantly, and so did Mrs. Lordson sympathetically, not well understanding what he said.

“I quite envy you having such an unsettled future before you,” said Newton Marrix.

“Why?”

“When your course and actions in the future are unsettled, then expectation steps in——”

“To be disappointed,” interrupted Rutherford somewhat bitterly.

“Not always, I hope.”

“I fear so. I have trained myself never to expect any pleasures or gratifications ; I leave my life to chance or fate, call it what

you will. I have no purpose in life that I know of. Why I came into existence is a mystery too deep for me to speculate on. I have no hope from any future, and have no work to do that I can see. I am at sea and in darkness," he ended, with a smile on his lips which the grave look in his eyes contradicted.

"La, how dreadful these young men talk!" thought Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson; but she said nothing, for she had wisdom enough to know when she should hold her peace, and in this respect rose superior to the generality of her charming sex.

Capri had overheard Guy Rutherford's last words as she stood near, and looked at him with an awakening interest.

"Now you no longer envy me," said Guy Rutherford to the author.

"I am not so sure of that. My purpose in life is not such a very exalted one that I



should not envy a man devoid of aim or object. I have to cover certain or uncertain reams of paper with ink."

"A glorious profession——"

"And to create some hundreds of puppets, whom I must dress and place in certain positions, in order that, when I pull the strings, they may fall in love with or murder each other, or flatter and cheat each other as the case may be in the closest imitation of natural puppets on life's stage."

"How delightful it must be to work the puppets, and make them obey your will!"

"Delightful," echoed Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson, waving her fan to and fro whilst the precious stones glittered with her every movement.

Just then Herr Rachznt sat down to the grand piano, on whose upturned lid the fair Alcestis rose against a golden background, from the purple darkness of Hades. The

great composer struck a deep-sounding chord in the bass, then paused two minutes. The murmur of conversation suddenly hushed. The great musician raised his left hand once more, and struck a second chord, more ringing than the first, to which a few weak notes high up in the treble made faint response. Once again the bass chords pealed, answered this time in quick succession by responses in the treble ; and then the harmony, if it may be called so, scampered riotously up and down the keyboard, running in and out of all kinds of keys with the charming irregularity of children playing at high gates ; now speeding from flats to sharps, and on to naturals, winding intricate scales of sound round and round itself until it became helplessly entangled and almost lost in the meshes, and cried out imploringly from the key-board in a wild fury of passion, stamping all over the notes with utter recklessness,

making a *mêlée* in the bass that rose to a storm, and then suddenly ceased.

There was a long pause as the famous performer rose, put on his spectacles, and ran his fingers through his long hair. A murmur of applause then sounded through the room, it was whispered that he had excelled himself to-night. Adrien Messieurs said he was inspired. Mrs. Frumage waved her fan, and Mrs. Lordson was subdued to silence.

"How wonderful," said Capri, who had never before heard Herr Rachznt, and she mentally wished that old Padre Pallamari was present to hear this great master.

Miss Raven had now taken up her violin, and had commenced a sonata. Just at that moment Capri saw Marcus Phillips enter the room. She felt her heart give a great throb, a pleasant light sparkled in her eyes.

She watched him approach Mrs. Stonex Stanning, and with a woman's quickness

she noticed the smile which came over her hostess's face as the artist spoke to her. Marcus Phillips sat down beside Mrs. Stonex Stanning and said something which Capri could not hear, from the distance that separated them, but saw a look of pleasure reflected in Mrs. Stonex Stanning's countenance.

Presently the artist's eyes went wandering over the room in search of some object; at last they met Capri's eyes, and he bowed and smiled across to her, but the smile quickly vanished when he saw Lord Harrick beside her, bending down to make some remark to her in a manner that savoured of confidence and friendship,

At last the sonata ended in a wild long-drawn note that quivered in the air. Mrs. Frumage beckoned Lord Harrick across the room, and Mrs. Stonex Stanning and Marcus Phillips went to speak to Capri, who was now talking to Guy Rutherford.

Capri held out her hand to the artist.

"Are you not late—how I wish you had been here when Herr Rachznt was playing!"

"I should have been here sooner had I known you would come early," he answered, in a low voice, intended only for her ear; but, low as it was, Mrs. Stonex Stanning heard the words. She turned and spoke to Guy Rutherford.

Capri did not reply immediately to the artist; when she next spoke she asked him how he liked her Greek dress.

"You are like a picture that has stepped from its frame and lost its way," he answered.

And so she was. The girl had never looked better. Her lithe graceful figure was draped in a soft-textured creamy robe, buttoned on the shoulders, with wide, falling sleeves that left her delicately-rounded arms bare. Her dress was edged with a deep border of Grecian design worked in

threads of gold. Two narrow bands of golden tissue were bound around her small shapely head. She had no ornaments; a lily was fastened in her girdle. The heat of the room had given a faint colour to her face: her great eyes, like fathomless wells of liquid light, sparkled from the excitement which the novelty of the scene caused her.

"I am glad you like my Greek attire, Marc," she said in her old easy manner.

"I should like to paint you in that dress, and call you Helen of Troy."

She looked into his face and smiled; he had not seen her look at him with that once familiar expression since she had migrated to Mayfair, and now his hopes brightened, and he grew happy once more.

"I should like it too," she answered, "but I am afraid the public would tire of me; besides, I have been photographed in this costume leaning against a huge vase.

Have you not seen the photographs in the stationers' windows?"

"No."

Newton Marrix came up quickly before Capri could say any more; she turned to look at an aryballos, signed by Xencphantus, and magnificently ornamented by a wonderful crowd of figures in relief.

"Do you see that man smiling down there near Mrs. Stonex Stanning?" asked the author.

"Yes."

"Mark him well; he is a little great man of whom all who dabble in literature must beware," said Newton in a tragic whisper.

"He looks harmless enough."

"Yes, poor man, he is more ignorant than the butter-merchant round the corner; yet, so strange are the contradictions of literary life, that he is considered an au-

thority in literature and art—in other words, a critic, than which there is nothing easier to become in these days.”

“Unhappily for those criticised.”

“He imagines himself a very fiery dragon of the press; believes that he can murder a literary reputation in a printed line. It’s true.”

“All fools are conceited.”

“When Adrien Messieurs published his volume of poems, ‘Passion’s Death,’ last year, this critic emptied the little vial of his wrath upon the poet. Becoming suddenly virtuous for half an hour, he denounced the book as un-Christian, emasculating, abominable, unfit for reading, and then in the next sentence asked what the whole volume meant. He finished by declaring Messieurs a mere boy.”

“It is a clever boy that could write such poems.”



“And yet less clever than Shelley or Keats, whom the scurvey rouges of their day pelted with all the foulness they could scrape from the slimy bottoms of their putrid hearts.”

“But Messieurs must know there is nothing easier to do than write a few disparaging lines without any genuine criticism.”

“Yes, he does, I daresay. But you see it is a mistake to imagine we have done with the Grub Street critics now-a-days. That race of asses is yet continued by some strange decree of providence. The class of vulture like Feron, who hounded Voltaire, Settle and Shadwell, who stung Dryden as ants might a lion, Dennis, who sought to crush the rising genius of Pope,—still lives with us, eats with us, drinks with us; it is an immortal race who would stab its best friend in the dark, or sing its enemies’ praises

in half a dozen different papers for a dinner at the Gaiety or a sovereign."

"You are severe to-night, New."

"No; I only speak of the rogues and fools of which literature more than any other profession or calling is full. The latter drivell in the faces of clever men and shout their twaddle into the public ears until that long suffering class for peace sake begins to take them at their own estimate."

"Peace I cry."

"Well, let us come down and see the little great man. Smile upon him when I introduce you, and make him believe you think he is somebody. You had better make friends with him; he is an art-critic too, bless the mark; for these fellows dabble at everything; literature, science, art, knowing as much about them beyond the set technical phrases as a crossing-sweeper."

"Yet he goes about a great deal."

"Yes, he talks well and most agreeably, for he has a good memory and has accumulated an amount of stolen wit from the books he has reviewed, ere he hastened to sell them in Bookseller's Row for half price. But he is a desirable man to know, be civil to him, for it's the small vermin that are more annoying than the larger creatures of the species."

Guy Rutherford had turned to where Capri stood.

"Is that the artist who painted the 'Beggar Maid' picture?" he asked, a light which some foreign woman had once called dangerous coming into his eyes.

"Yes, that is Mr. Phillips," she answered, carelessly.

He made no further remark to her just then, but presently murmured as if speaking

to himself rather than intending to be overheard by her—

“It is no wonder, said the lords,  
She is more beautiful than day.”

Capri glanced up at him suddenly, but his eyes were fixed on some object at the further end of the room

Looking at him then she saw for the first time that look of almost woman-like softness in his face which his eyes when they glanced straight at her utterly contradicted. Capri still gazed at him, there was something about him which attracted her strangely; she noted his shapely classic head covered with crisp brown curls, the low straight brows, and delicately cut features.

It was a handsome face, she thought, a face that a woman might remember through life.

"Do you know," he said, turning his head towards her once more, "I think I could paint you?"

"You are an artist then?"

"Yes, I dabble in all the arts, and if I were not leaving town at the end of the week I would ask you for the favour of a sitting."

Capri gave a low short musical laugh; she was pleased at what he had said.

"Why do you wish to paint me?" she asked.

"Shall I tell you?"

His eyes looked into hers, but the light she had seen there before had now gone, and she noticed a shadow crossed his face.

"Do," she said, becoming suddenly serious in sympathy with his expression.

"Once I knew a face which at times yours strongly resembles. Not like you when you smile, but very like you when you think ;

and in your graver moments there is often a look in your eyes which haunts me."

He spoke slowly and deliberately, and the girl saw a look of genuine sorrow rest on his face.

"Is she dead?" she asked him almost under her breath, and with a reverence in her tone as if she spoke of a sacred subject.

"Yes, so they told me."

Capri lowered her eyes. She reproached herself with having been vain enough to imagine he wished to paint her portrait from love of her face. She had wronged him in thought and misunderstood him.

"I am sorry," she said in an altered voice, "that I have even unconsciously given you pain."

"Would it be pain for us, I wonder, to see a ghost?" he asked.

"That depends," she answered, "on

whether the ghost would bring us back pleasant or unpleasant memories."

"That is true."

"I overheard you," the girl continued, looking at him with an interest she did not care to conceal, "saying to Mr. Marrix that you had no future to live for. Will you think it strange of me if I say that is perhaps because you live too much in the past. Old men may do that because all the world lies behind them, but young men should live in the future."

"I shall remember what you say," he replied, looking at her now with that light in his eyes which was dangerous to women's peace.

"And I, too, will remember what you have told me."

"Very well, let it serve as a link between us. Here comes Lord Harrick."

A fresh murmur ran through the room ;

the hum of voices suddenly ceased; the great actor from the Arena Theatre had come. He looked tired and pale; his long hair, quickly turning to grey, almost touched his broad shoulders; his wonderful grey eyes glanced quickly round the room, and met many familiar faces.

Miss Fletson and a group of young girls stood round the piano. Mr. Hal Vector was just going to sing his new song, "What Sorrow said to the Swallow," the words of which were written for him by Adrien Messieurs.

"Let us go and have some ice-creams before he commences," said Lord Harrick to Capri.

There was something unusual in the viscount's voice that made her look up suddenly. He met her eyes with a shy glance, and laughed a little nervously.

"Shall we wait until the song is over?"



“There will be too great a crush then.”

She laid her hand upon his arm and went out of the room and down a long passage, crowded with palm-trees and bronze statues, towards a conservatory that opened at the end, which for this occasion was turned into a buffet, where cooling drinks, and delicious ice-creams, and fruits were being served.

Towards this spot they bent their steps; but they never reached there. Half way down the passage was an alcove, where a great crimson ottoman stood. The spot was almost completely shaded by wide-leaved plants and palm branches, which met over the entrance. It was a very shrine of Cupid's fashioned for flirtation.

“Are you not tired?” said Lord Harrick, as they arrived at the alcove. “Let us rest here a moment,” and, without waiting

for her to reply, he put aside the tall branches with his hand and entered.

Capri felt that the moment she had so often longed and hoped for and thought of had come; she was sure he was about asking her to become his wife, and now at this, perhaps the most important moment of her life, when all her desires and ambitions were about being satisfied, there was no sense of gladness in her heart, no thoughts of triumph in her mind.

And yet the prospect that lay before her almost bewildered her; a title, presentation at court, a house in town that had many historic associations, a manor in Yorkshire and a castle in Scotland, family jewels which had belonged to the Stuarts, a position which in her wildest dreams she had never thought of until lately, and all that power, and pomp, and dignity which money invariably brings in its wake, all, all would be hers!

It was a dazzling picture that rose before her mental vision. Was it all but a dream from which she should awake presently ?

“Capri,” commenced Lord Harrick, when he had sat down beside her on the ottoman, “do you remember the day I got that scratch in fencing, and you bound up my wrist ?”

“I do,” she answered, not looking at him.

He took one of her hands in his.

“It was only a bit of rag, you know,” he said, speaking in a lower and gentler tone than was his habit usually, “that you bound my wrist with, but—but—I have kept it ever since.”

Capri glanced at his hand holding hers, and was sorry for him that it looked so large and red, and that his fingers were so short and broad.

“Why have you kept it ?” she asked innocently.

"Because it was once yours."

He pressed her hand, hesitated a moment, then put it to his lips and kissed it again and again. She made no resistance, but remained perfectly passive, and awaited her fate from his lips. She would do nothing to hasten or control it in any way.

"Capri," he went on, "do you know I have been in love with you ever since that day?"

"No, I did not know that."

She could faintly hear the music in the drawing-room, and when the door opened once she could catch the words of "What Sorrow said to the Swallow." Some one came down the passage, and she counted the sounds of the footfall, and listened to the murmur of voices in the buffet beyond.

"But I was in love with you all the while ; it commenced that day, I think."

"That was strange."

"Not in the least. I intended to have told you about it the night we came from Richmond, only for that con—that horse shying."

Once she raised her eyes to his. The blood had come into his face and turned it to a deep red, his round good-natured looking eyes almost sparkled; she felt his hot breath sweeping over her neck and face.

"Capri, have you nothing to say to me?" he asked. "Do you—can you care for me—will you be my wife?"

The great crisis of her life had come at last, the words which above all others she had longed and hoped to hear had crossed his lips. His face was close beside her.

"You surprise me," she said hurriedly; her throat was dry; she could hardly speak.

"Then did you never think I loved you?"

"I did—but I did not think—this would come so soon."

"Now that it has come, what do you say? Will you be mine, Capri?" he paused, waiting for her to speak.

Just for one moment she thought of Marcus Phillips, thought how happy she was in his presence, though he was poor and unknown to fame; the memory of his face came between her and Lord Harrick, his frank blue eyes smiled upon her, she heard his voice ringing in her ears; for a second she hesitated.

Then she remembered, as in a dream, Mrs. Stonex Stanning had smiled when he approached her. That recollection decided her. It was a pity Marc was so poor. Poverty was a thing of which she was heartily sick. If she married the artist, she would be a drag on him during the best days of his life, she would shackle him and spoil

his future ; whereas, if she parted from him now, he would probably make a wealthy marriage with some woman more worthy of him than she was, and in years to come they would both make merry over their boy and girl love, and laugh at the time they thought themselves heart-broken because she had married a wealthy peer.

By such thoughts Capri hardened her heart whilst Lord Harrick sat there looking into her changing face, and waiting for her reply. For answer she gave him both her hands.

“ You will be mine ? ” he said, in a low quick voice, pressing her hands whilst he spoke.

“ I will.”

He put his arm around her, drew her to him, and kissed her lips again and again. In the fervour and passion of the moment he did not notice that she was almost as

cold to him as a statue, for in moments of emotion we but see our own feelings reflected in others.

Meanwhile Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson was talking to Lady Ariadne.

"You are fond of art, I believe?"

"La, I adore it," said the American, wondering how it was that Lady Ariadne looked so charming, though she had never a scrap of velvet on her, and no jewellery save a string of pearls laid against the whiteness of her breasts. "I adore it, and I'm sure there's no gallery in Europe I have not been to; and I bought a coffer and a Greek vase in Paris that cost me some money, I can tell you."

Lady Ariadne turned her face away wearily, and looked at Adrien Messieurs; the poet gazed into space.

"What queer creatures the aristocracy and poets are," thought Mrs. W. Achilles Lord-



son. "They never take any more notice of you than if you were a stick." Then she added aloud, by way of impressing her hearers,

"Yes, they cost me a lot of money, and I'll be happy to show them to you and the gentleman—the poet—any day you will call; they are rare, and worth seeing, I can assure you."

"Thank you," said Lady Ariadne, calmly.  
"You are most kind."

Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson's ruby stomacher glittered, she waved her great fan to and fro, and re-arranged the folds of her white velvet skirts. She felt assured she had now succeeded in impressing Lady Ariadne.

"It has been a most charming reception," said Mrs. Frumage, as she and her friend, Lady Everfair, prepared to depart.

"And Herr Rachznt plays like an angel. He would be a delightful creature if his breath was not so odorous of garlic."

Newton Marrix laughed.

"We have been speaking to Mr. Phaxton," said Lady Everfair. "You know him, of course?"

"Slightly. I hope you found him interesting."

"He would be charming, I imagine, if one knew what he was saying, but as he is a dreadful bore——"

"And a philosopher."

"Which is very much the same, I never know what he is saying."

"But he is really a clever man. He can spell Mediterranean twice in a breath without missing a letter."

"You will really be the death of me some day," said Lady Everfair, laughing behind her fan.

"My dear, you have said so before," said Mrs. Frumage.

"And yet," said Newton Marrix, "we have been happily spared what would prove an inestimable calamity."

He bowed low as he spoke. The countess smiled on him serenely.

"How picturesque Miss Dankers looks!" remarked Mrs. Frumage.

Capri was standing by one of the large Corean vases, a great Indian fan hung on the wall above her head; her red lips were parted with a smile, and a look of satisfaction rather than pleasure rested on her face.

Guy Rutherford watched her from the opposite side of the room, his eyes taking in every detail of the picture she presented.

"She is a lovely girl," he said to himself, as he still gazed on her olive face, and the

perfect grace of the pose into which her limbs had naturally fallen.

"Shall I stay in England after all, or go?" he asked himself.

Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson rose and made her way through the dispersing crowd to make her adieux to Mrs. Stonex Stanning. Newton Marrix and Capri followed in her train.

As the girl passed the door she paused a moment to speak to Marcus Phillips.

"Good night," she said, "I shall call to see you if I can to-morrow?"

The artist smiled and pressed her hand.

Lord Harrick and Guy Rutherford saw Mrs. Lordson to her brougham.

"Good night, Capri," said Lord Harrick to her, as he assisted her in, "may I call and see you in the morning?"

"Yes," she answered cheerfully, giving

him a smile at the same time, which he thought of for half the night.

He closed the door and the brougham drove away.

"Rutherford," he said, taking his friend's arm when they had lit their cigars and were walking homewards in the cool night air. "Rutherford, old fellow, I have asked her to be my wife."

There was a slight pause, for Guy Rutherford expected Lord Harrick to continue.

"And she?" he said at last.

"Consented of course," said the peer.

They walked on again in silence. Guy Rutherford threw back his head and looked up at the few stars visible against the dark purple background of sky.

"You do not congratulate me."

Then Guy Rutherford took the cigar from

his mouth and spoke as if he were continuing a train of thought.

“Men have risked body and soul for women not half so lovely as she.”

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.







